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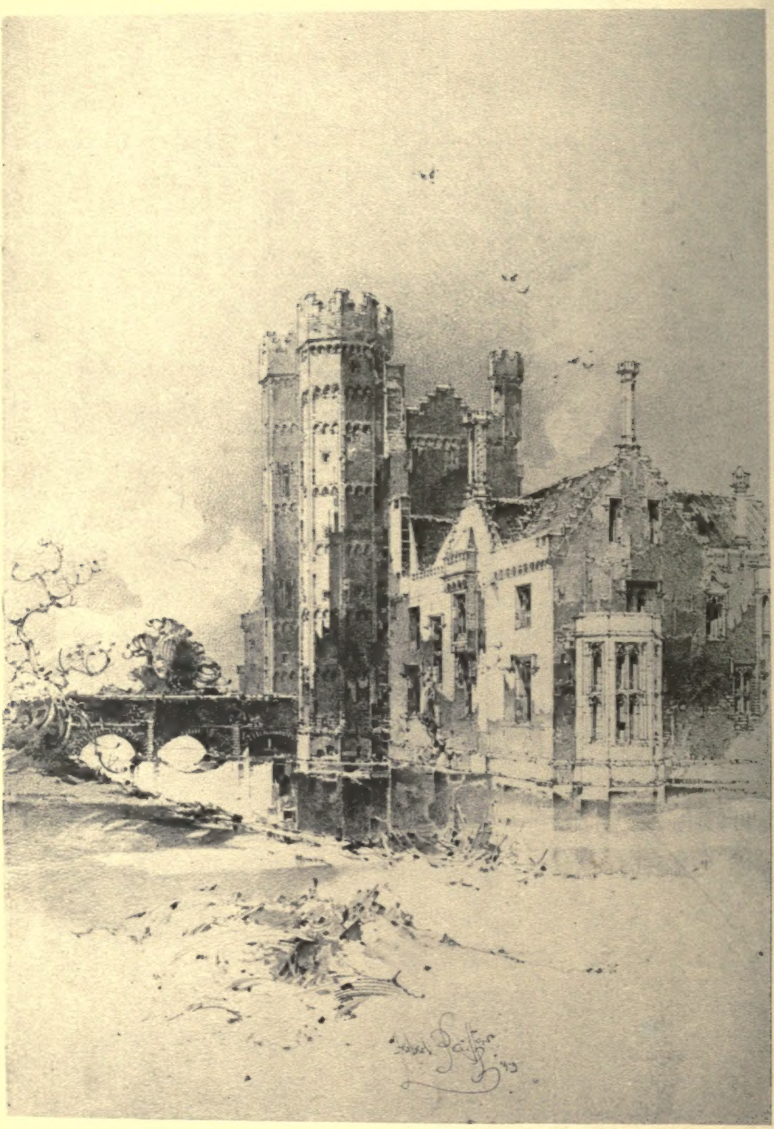

OXBOROUGH HALL

MOATED HOUSES

BY

W. OUTRAM TRISTRAM

ILLUSTRATED BY

HERBERT RAILTON

WITH SEVENTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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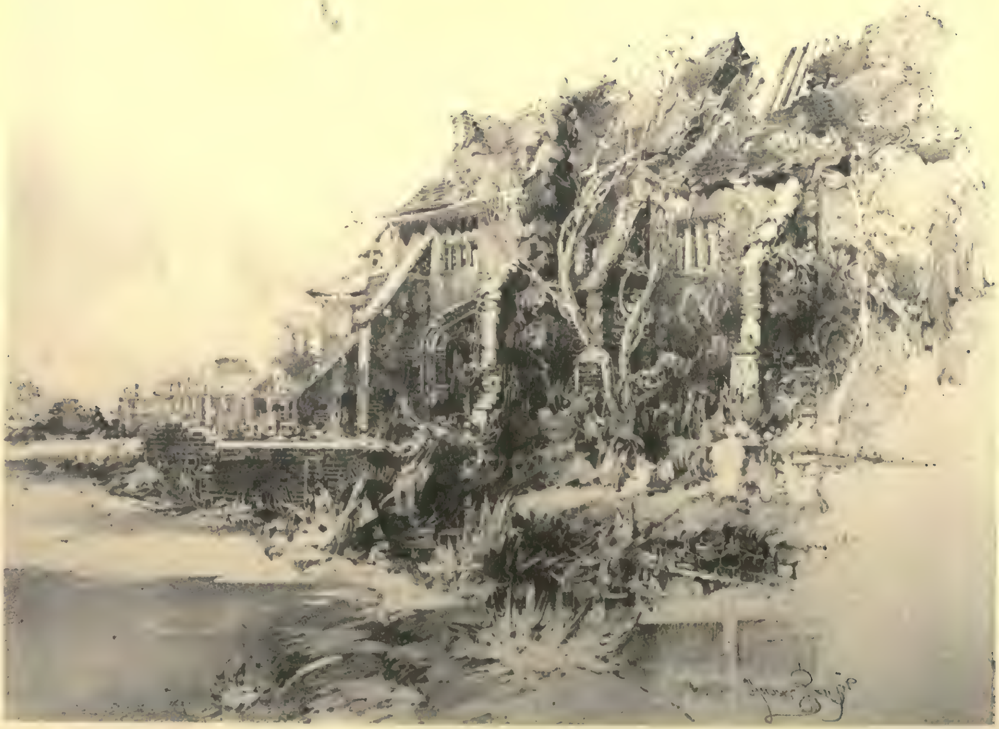


DURANT'S ARBOUR

MOATED HOUSES

I

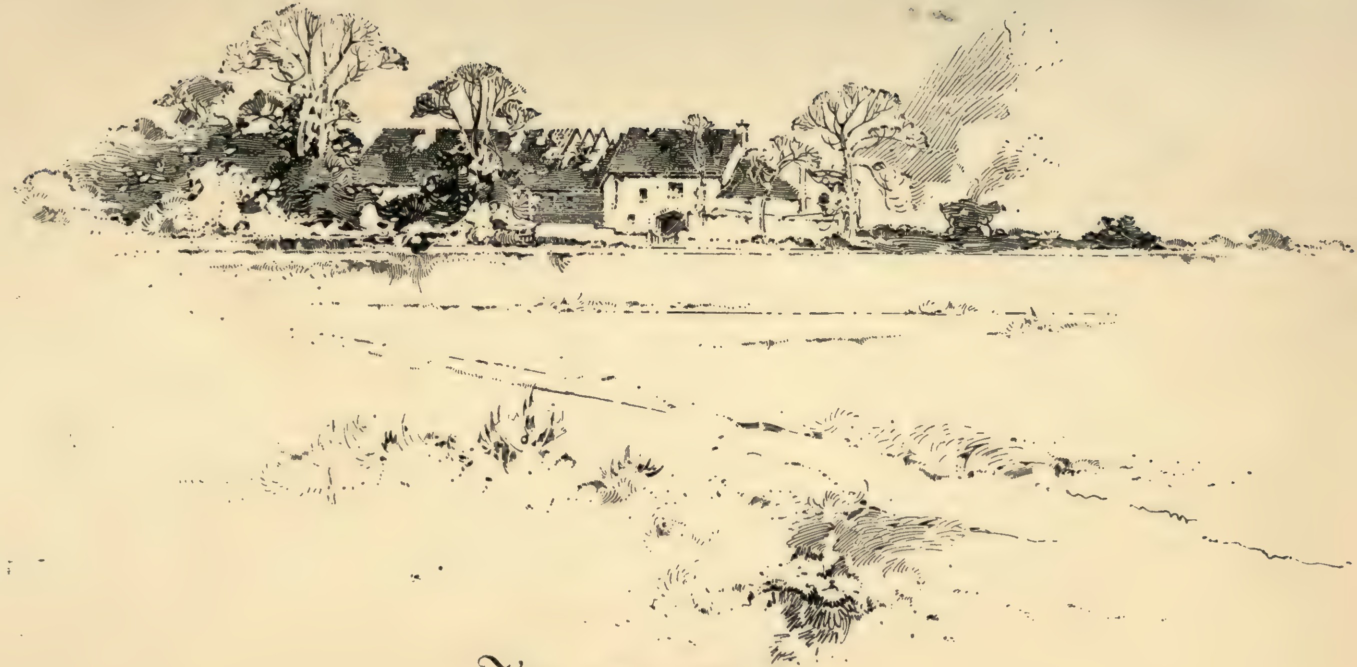
DURANTS ARBOUR

A FARM for eight hundred pigs does not at first sight seem a subject for historical research. Nor are piggeries usually associated with spacious courtyards, massive and heavily buttressed walls, and a moat which can show in some places a width of eighty feet. The portent may, however, be seen without travelling ten miles from Charing Cross; and if Ponders End does not strike one as an enticing goal for a Pilgrim's Progress, this north-eastern suburb of London can supply in Durants Arbour at all events a name which has poetic possibilities, and a building which gives to the county of Middlesex a singular example of a moated house.

The beauties of perfectly level pastures have been noticed by observers, and painters have drawn inspiration from them. The melancholy flats, from which Durants Arbour stands up like a gnarled monument of times departed, may not add converts to this cult of Nature's less noticed aspects, especially if the old house is first seen at the close of a dim October day to the accompaniment of cold rain falling unintermittently. Though it stands but just beyond the limits of a thickly-peopled district, which is already encroaching upon it, and which will soon surround it with a suburban embrace, the place conveys a feeling of strange loneliness. A nearer approach across grass fields being gradually turned into slush reveals the trace of ruins. No wonder the visitor is perplexed.

What story can this great, old, half-dismantled house have to tell! What irony of fate has brought it from a mansion down to a piggery! What ominous voices have been re-echoed in days gone by from rafters now laid bare and resounding only to the chorus of the stye! A certain banned look which the house wears; the porcine purpose to which it has been put; suggest the work of that slow punishment which sometimes overtakes crime. Retribution seems to have fallen here upon some dark secret. The house is haunted by some memory or presence strangely wicked or dark!

Should such fancies strike other visitors to Durants Arbour, if they have the courage to go there on a rainy day, and dare the timed dallyings of the Great Eastern Railway, they may console themselves with the reflection that their fancies are founded on fact. Research shows this house to have been the constant resort of a peculiarly infamous person who has naturally undergone the process of ineffectual whitewashing, but who will always stand pilloried in history. And yet of all historical villains of the deepest dye, this villain seems the least likely



View from the North

DURANTS ARBOUR, PONDERS END

to have been associated with such a place as this. So strangely out of keeping with his abominable personality do these surroundings appear, that his identity might be profitably made the subject of a Guessing Competition in which every competitor should have an unlimited number of tries. The chorus in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* with reference to a similar trial of skill as the one suggested, but offering as the problem for solution, "that quality in man can woman's love win and long inherit," encourages competitors by the remark that they are not likely to arrive at a correct solution of the riddle if they sit musing on the ground one day, or even seven. It is to be believed that a like latitude for correct guessing might be successfully allowed to anybody trying to name the ominous personage whose visits to Durants Arbour have left the place haunted. Unless inspired by previous knowledge or guided by local legend no one would believe that this moated house, with its story dating back to the first Edward; with its buttresses which have been buffeted by winds blown across the Wars of the Roses; with its deep moat strikingly marking those days of English history when peasants revolted, and Chaucer sang, and Langland chronicled, and country gentlemen had to put ditches of water round their houses to prevent their throats being cut at midnight—unless inspired by previous knowledge or guided by local legend no one would suspect that such a house as this Durants Arbour, telling the story of Mediæval England as it does from every one of its stones, should have been the constant visiting-place of a villain so infamous yet comparatively speaking so recent as Judge Jeffreys.

The full-bottomed wigs of Charles the Second's time, frills, furbelows, and slashed doublet, to say nothing of the red robes of the Recorder of London, significantly coloured though they are, seem out of keeping with this monument of the Middle Ages. Durants Arbour should have been haunted by some earlier kind of ghost, by some mediæval atrocity in the form of a man, mail-clad for choice. The cruel Judge of the Restoration, with his handsome Spanish face, and fine sleepy eyes half closed in some melancholy meditation of murder, seems out of place. Humphrey de Bohun, who had a moated stronghold with some dungeons underneath it only a mile or so from Durants Arbour, is more the sort of person, as an abiding memory, to have suited the place. And his heart could not have been harder. Yet in spite of anomalies of dress and manners, it is the memory of Jeffreys that remains. Durants Arbour is inseparably coupled with his name in every place within a mile of the house where a scrap of legend can be got if called for, or a suggestion of rumour obtained. The wicked Judge is everywhere under varying titles. Some call him Judge Jeffreys: others call him Sir George: others Lord Jeffreys. All titles are correct. They mark the different grades of that sudden advance in legal profligacy which brought their owner to the Old Bailey, the Bench, and the Woolsack.

But whether as Recorder, Judge of the High Court, Lord Chancellor of England, local rumour of the most stubborn type will connect Jeffreys with

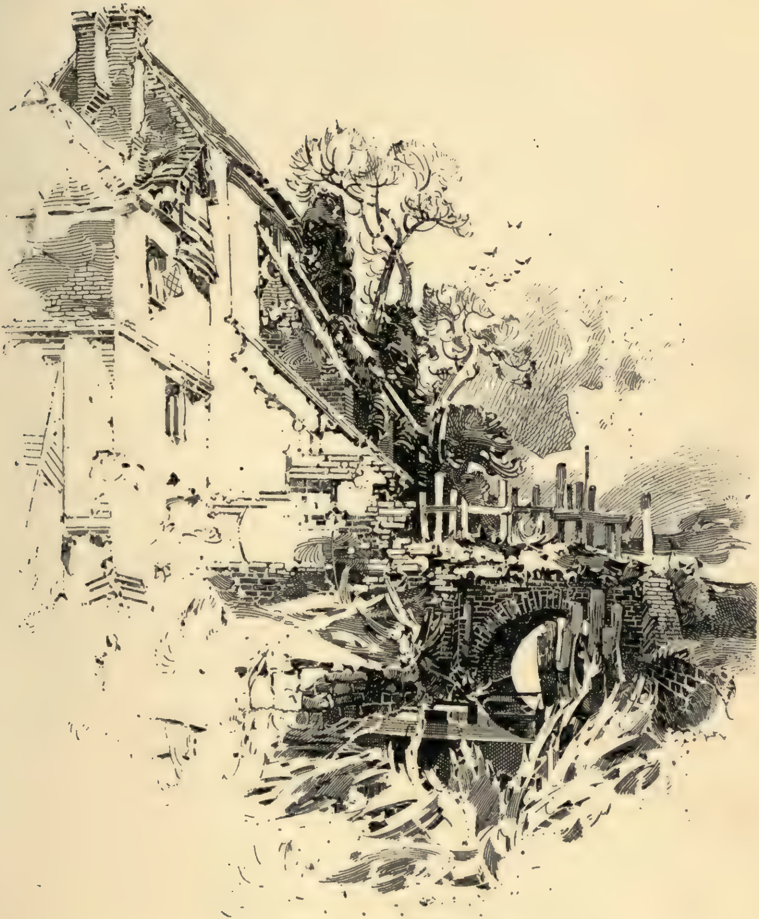
Durants, and, strangely enough, without knowing how or why.

Those missing links in a house's story will be presently supplied. But not before its record has been traced through periods previous, and some suggestions given of its many inhabitants, quiet, home-keeping, little-known people, who were born, married, lived and died at Durants Arbour long before Judge Jeffreys' roars announced his arrival, or mellow tones were heard after dinner singing French *chansons à boire.* This is to go back to the days of the first Edward, when the Jews were being expelled from England and the country was on the eve of that struggle with Scotland which led to the battle of Falkirk and the death of the heroic Wallace. In the very year in which that strange people who now hold the scales of Europe were deprived, so far as England was concerned, of the privilege of holding any, Richard de Hessitis, the then owner of Durants, died. His lands were valued at sixteen pounds sixteen and a halfpenny, which does not to a modern view seem an extraordinary sum for a landlord to divide equally between his three sisters. However, the ladies were all married at the time, and made up for the meagreness of their portions by the prettiness of their names: at all events with the exception of Emma, which has a modern ring. Sabrina and Aveline make up for her deficiencies in this respect, Sabrina especially so, though she died without children.

Emma was married to a John Heyron, a name strangely enough carrying a suggestion that some

Jews at all events had escaped the general expulsion. The son of this couple, also named John, came into possession of Durants. At the invitation of James Van Artevelde, Edward the Third put the French lilies on his shield with the motto *Dieu et mon Droit*, and claimed the French crown by the right of his mother Isabella. This proceeding marked the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, an insensate proceeding in which the contented owners of Durants Arbour did not take part. They occupied themselves in the wiser pursuits of living on their own lands, living quietly and dying in the natural course. The enlarging of the moat occupied more of their attention than the deeds of fruitless daring done in France, and while Edward the Third with the glories of Crécy upon him was dreaming of fresh territories, they were only thinking how best to improve their garden.

A more military figure, however, invaded the moated seclusion of Durants when the war had run twelve years of its aimless course, and the name of Sir Baldwin de Radyngton suggests feats other than horticultural. He may possibly have laid lance in rest by the side of the Black Prince. He came to Durants Arbour as the husband of the already once married Maud, daughter of the heiress of Thomas Durant, grandson of the Aveline already mentioned. He died of that scourge which swept England from her northern borders to the Channel, and killed people so fast that the great difficulty was to bury them. The extinction of a third of the population, fields uncultivated, farms abandoned, spoke eloquently as to the terrors of this visitation; the numbers killed



from the Moat

DURANTS ARBOUR. JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE

daily in the French War ceased to be counted, and the second generation shuddered and reached out trembling hands for their grandfathers' nostrums at mere mention of the Black Death. Sir Baldwin de Radyngton meanwhile, having survived or evaded the French War, was equally successful in shunning the pestilence.

He lived quietly on the acres which he had got by marriage, tilled his fruit trees, stared at the moat, congratulated himself on perils escaped, and probably remained quite unconscious that two poets had at last risen in England. The *Canterbury Tales* and the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, proclaiming the genius of Chaucer and Langland, were, it is likely, unopened books to the good Knight. Nor was he probably aware that the Master of an Oxford College had made the discovery that the clergy were sometimes hypocritical, and the tyranny of the landowners was worthy of some such sort of scourge as we now call Socialism. Wickliff would have been little more than a name to Sir Baldwin; but being a landowner himself, and likely as one bent on enlarging his estates to need the services of lawyers, he would have pricked his ears at the mention of the word "Præmunire," and slowly gathered that a statute had been passed ordering that English should be used in the Law Courts, and not French.

Having survived many other dangers and difficulties, Sir Baldwin de Radyngton also survived his wife. Henry the Fourth was King, the revolt of Percy and Glendower was in full progress, and the shouts of the victors and the groans of the dying were going up from reddened meadows round Shrewsbury, when it came to Sir Baldwin's turn to slowly sicken and die. His tenure of Durants Arbour had been a decidedly long one, and as he had no children of his own the property passed to William Wroth, son of his deceased wife Maud by her first marriage.

A succession practically unbroken for two hundred and sixty-eight years testified to the soundness of the Wroth constitution, and to the healthiness of the moated house in which they lived. At the time of the late owner's death, house and lands surrounding it were valued at ten marks exactly. The tenacity shown by the Wroth family in holding what they had got, to say nothing of a capacity for snatching more, is evidenced by the first growth of the property in the space of a hundred and sixteen years. When Wolsey's administration was in its zenith; when Henry the Eighth was preparing to receive the Emperor Charles the Fifth at Canterbury, and taking counsel with contemporary stage managers on the approaching glories of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; John Wroth, Esquire, lay a-dying at Durants, after an inquisition had been made of those extended lands, houses, and gardens, no longer serviceable to his future needs. The extensions of Durants Arbour evince themselves as follows:—The Manor itself (the moat not forgotten): 20 houses: 20 Jots: 2 Mills: 10 Gardens: 300 acres of arable land: 200 acres of meadow: 40 acres of pasture: 10 acres of wood.

The death of Sir Henry Wroth in 1671 marked the extinction of the family which had so sedulously built up this property. Between the periods of 1519 and

1671 names appear as owners of Durants other than Wroth. But these seeming interlopers had married Miss Wroths, all the same. The succession was carried on by the female line through the spacious days of great Elizabeth and the stirring and coloured times of Charles the First. Cecil Lord Burghley was created Secretary of State. The clergy had to take the oath of Supremacy. Edward the Sixth's Prayer Book was restored, to the unspeakable benefit of theological disputants; the Armada came and went; finally Elizabeth went herself; but still the Wroth family succeeded each other in a placid and contented possession of Durants Arbour.

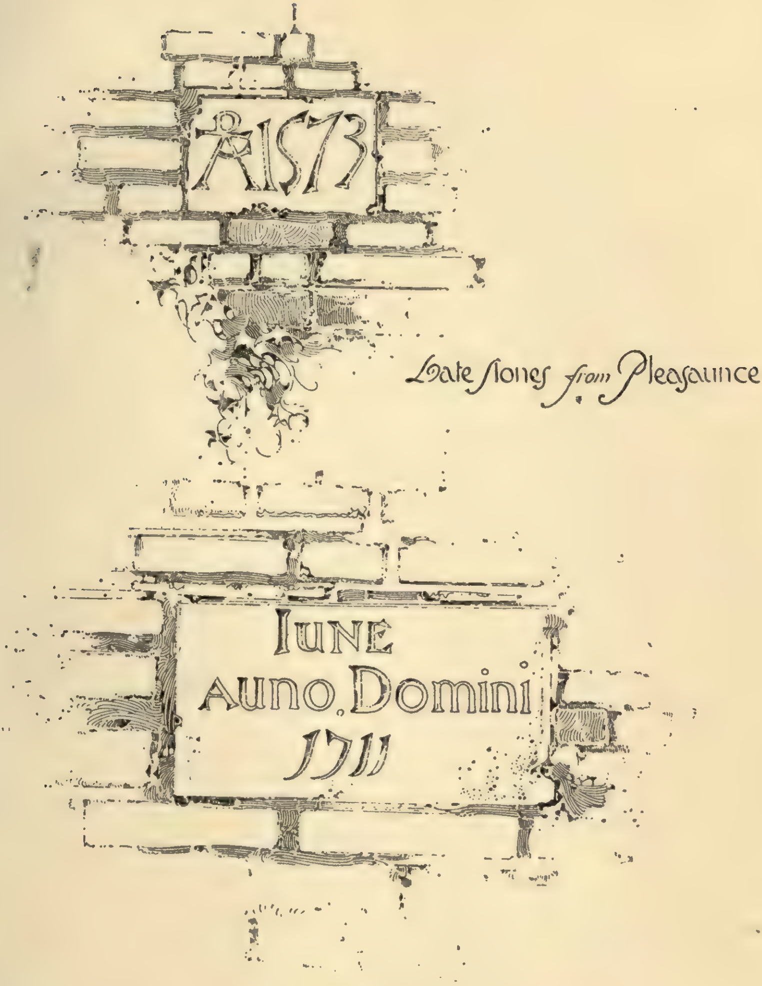
A certain William Bower, Esquire, held the place by marriage in the year of Laud's elevation to the Archbishopric, and in the safe seclusion of his moated walls received news of that great struggle in which the causes of Charles the First and civil and religious liberty were put to the arbitrament of Civil War. Faithful to the family failing, though inspired to it only by marriage, William Bower took neither side in that historic strife; or if he did don the scarf of Charles the First, or the morion and orange sash of Cromwell, retired at the earliest opportunity from the fighting line. He sat on the fence, or on the wall of his moat, watching which way the cat was going to jump, and early in the jolly days of the Restoration was gathered to his fathers without having definitely committed himself.

But where all this while is the Evil Genius of Durants Arbour to whom reference has already been made, whose haunting impression has been so insisted on? The story of the house and its inmates has been traced for three hundred and eighty years without any mention of that personage, so indissolubly connected with it that his name is a byword in the mouth of every country gossip. There is, however, a time for all things. On the stage proper as well as on that larger theatre of the World where facts are dramatized and historians tell the tale, every actor has the moment appointed for masquerade. The hour for the villain's entrance upon the scene has been sounded. Strangely enough, at the very moment when the play (after passing through such scenes of stress as the Peasants' Revolt, the Wars of the Roses, the Black Death, Wickliff's Revivalist Movement, the Statute of Præmunire, and other dangers of mediævalism) is seen moving to the calm, corrupted conclusion of the Restoration, the Call Boy of history roars his summons for the chief villain's entrance. A long-drawn-out drama of quiet domestic interest takes a tragic turn; and the grey walls and buttresses of the old moated house become darkened as the lights are turned down for his baleful approach. The ominous figure of Jeffreys invades Durants Arbour, casting a shade.

It will surprise some people to learn that though no name but that of Jeffreys is to be heard of in connection with Durants Arbour within a circuit of three miles, the greatest difficulty has been experienced in finding out that he had anything to do with the place. Inquiry elicits from one local savant that Judge Jeffreys lived yonder: another tells you that it was Chancellor Jeffreys' house: a third goes a step further and says that Sir George Jeffreys set out from Durants Arbour for the Bloody Assize. Curiosity having been raised to the highest pitch, local histories are found to be silent. Not even a mention of the cruel Judge's name is made. As the only real authorities for a true life of Jeffreys are the *State Trials* and the *Newgate Calendar*, both depositories of villainy are consulted. Each emits an empty sound. Yet still local rumour remains stubborn. It will have it that Jeffreys lived at Durants Arbour. The value of a tradition so engrained as this being a factor which should never be underrated (because though local inhabitants may tell lies, they are not imaginative enough to make up legends), fuel is added to research, and the connection of Jeffreys with Durants Arbour is at last found—not as might be supposed in some obscure pamphlet on Judicial Murders, Bloody Assizes, and processions to Tyburn and kindred gaols, but in the decorous pages of a parish register. A wedding, and not an unjust sentence for treason never committed, prepares Ponders End for the Judge's awful approach. And Jeffreys enters Durants Arbour to the sound of marriage music.

So unexpected an accompaniment to his coming is accounted for as follows. In the days when every civil and military official was required to declare that they did not believe the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and when Shaftesbury's quarrel with Charles the Second gave birth to our modern terms "Ministry" and "Opposition"—in the year 1673, that is to say, Durants Arbour was sold by William Lord Maynard and William Maynard (executors of Sir Henry Wroth, last of his race) to Sir Thomas Stringer, Knight, for £8,900. Sir Thomas Stringer was a lawyer with a large practice, and contemporary records speak of him as a man of repute. That he was the exact opposite may be inferred from the fact that he was one of Jeffreys' most intimate friends; that his elevation to the Bench fifteen years after his purchase of Durants was the last appointment that Jeffreys made as Lord Chancellor; and that he was left forty shillings to buy a remembrance-ring with in Jeffreys' last will and testament, made in the Tower of London and dated April the 15th, 1689. Apart from this strange piece of property, however, Sir Thomas Stringer was also possessed of a son. This son's name was William. And William married one of Jeffreys' daughters, whose name was Margaret.

The marriage took place at Hedgerley, Buckinghamshire, on October 15th, 1687. It was dissolved by William's death in the second year of Walpole's Administration, and his widow died at Durants four years afterwards, in the reign of George the First. The matrimonial venture is only memorable from the added motive it lent to Jeffreys' visits to a house so curiously associated with his name. He had come to Durants as a friend. He now came to it also as a father-in-law. That his visits were possibly frequent may be supposed from the ordinary course of family affairs under the influence of new relationship: that they were certainly so may be gathered from the indelible impression left in the neighbourhood after a lapse of over two hundred years that he absolutely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A 1573
IUNE
Anno Domini
1711

DURANTS ARBOUR, PONDERS END. JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE

owned and lived at the house, at which he was in fact only a visitor.

The different periods of Jeffreys' stays at Durants Arbour in the dual capacity of friend and father-in-law must be left to surmise, since two centuries have passed since his last call, and Sir Thomas Stringer's visiting-book is not in the Record Office or the British Museum. His own house at Bulstrode was within an easy drive, and as birds of a feather flock together, especially in moments of suspense, it is likely that Jeffreys took counsel with his friend and co-partner in legal villainy at the most strenuous periods of his public life. He bought Bulstrode five years after Sir Thomas Stringer bought Durants Arbour, and no doubt drove over to Durants to tell his friend of certain royal junketings which had taken place at Bulstrode in August 1678. Jeffreys, in his newly acquired dignity of Common Serjeant, had in that state entertained Charles and the Duchess of Portsmouth at his Buckinghamshire home. The number of healths drunk on this signal instance of royal favour is on record, and absolves king and subject from any suspicion of being temperance reformers. Jeffreys during these libations would have tuned his voice to a catch, and old Rowley and Louise de Querouaille no doubt joined in. One of the Common Serjeant's celebrated *chansons à boire* would have sounded more than usually mellow to the ears of the frail beauty who was at the moment acting as an agent of France and persuading her royal lover to sell his country. Do they not make a charming trio? I expect that they sang three or four catches before morning.

Jeffreys had lost his first wife only six months before; but this did not matter. He had married a second one in three months, and the erstwhile Lady Jones would have been present in her new honours at this royal orgy; accompanied Sir George on his drive over to Durants; assisted his recital of the night's humours; and done a little match-making with the young son of the house, while her husband withdrew with his host to crack a bottle or two in the great dining-hall, and to discuss what could be illegally done in the way of legal advancement. A possible instrument for the purpose—Titus Oates—had lately emerged from the mud.

I can see the great coach lumbering over the drawbridge at the close of some such visit to Durants Arbour, as it carried Sir George and his lady back to Bulstrode. The light falls on the Judge's face as he leans out of the window to wave a good-bye to his boon companion. The face is clearly seen, with its handsome effeminate features, a white smiling mask framed by the dark curled wig. Thus seen, the already dreaded Judge looks like some wicked woman. The last rays of the setting sun stain this impression of departing justice with a flush of red, as if in anticipation of the omens coming on. Those omens soon reached fulfilment. Five years afterwards Jeffreys was Lord-Chief-Justice, and his hands were red with the blood of Russell and Sidney, who had nothing whatever to do with the Rye House Plot, except to suffer innocently for it. Nor were these judicial murders sufficient to stay those relentless feet ever hurrying after fresh victims. The story that Jeffreys actually set out from Durants Arbour for the Bloody Assize stirs the imagination; but published records are against this belief of a countryside, and I read that the Lord-Chief-Justice set out to decimate four counties after strengthening himself for the effort at a health resort, and drinking the waters at Tunbridge Wells. But he would have visited Durants Arbour on his return from that expedition of butchery, talked over his late judicial doings with Sir Thomas Stringer, cracked many a bottle over the pleasing recollection, fondled his daughter Margaret, soon to be mistress of the place, and sung his French *chansons à boire.* The long succession of honest owners of Durants, and Wroths, fade before this memory of this dreadful visitor to their old home.

Suddenly a discordant outburst rises from that ruined courtyard of Durants Arbour which time and an infamous memory has turned into a piggery. The clamours of eight hundred porkers pining to be fed, for a moment drown the fancied echoes of the wicked Judge's drinking song. But only for a moment. Then above that raucous yet befitting chorus, once more seems to rise in tones of mellow irony the infernal jingle. Jeffreys asserts himself.

II

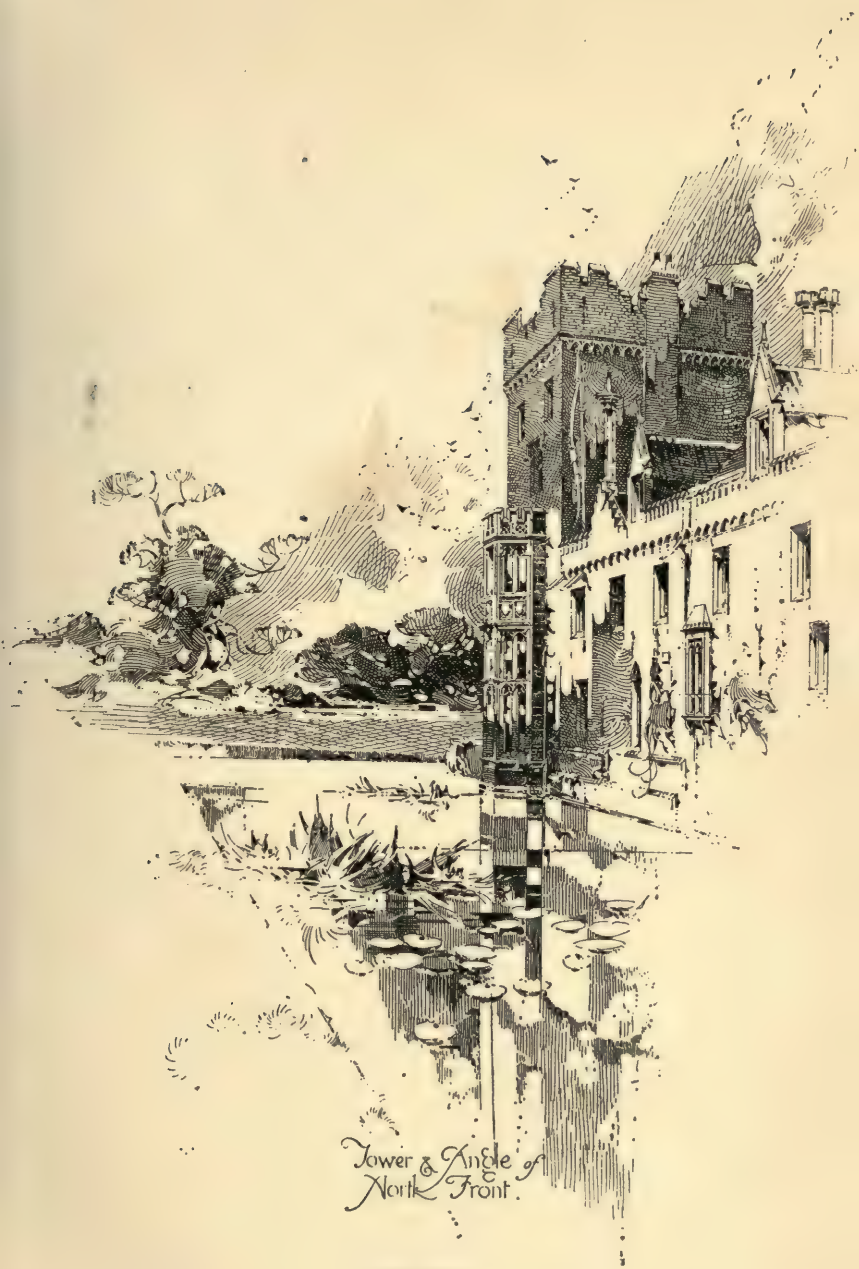
OXBURGH HALL

THOSE who have seen and admired the beautiful College of the two Queens at Cambridge have seen Oxburgh Hall without its moat. Both buildings are of the same period. Both are built of brick. And if the moat at Oxburgh, with its measurements of 275 feet by 52, is a very real and substantial affair, Queens' College, Cambridge, seen from a certain point of view, also has the appearance of being moated. With their external resemblance, as will be easily realized, all parallels between the buildings cease. Their stories travel on different paths and to goals very diverse. A seat of learning in a famous University town, and a country gentleman's defensible house, moated, towered, battlemented *more castelli*, furnish two very diverse needs in a nation's life. The figure of Erasmus, scholar, wit, traveller, diplomat, essentially man of the world, musing from the tower of the College of the two Queens on that Renaissance which was bursting into life about his feet, typifies the mission of the Cambridge foundation : from under the arched tower of Oxburgh, and across the drawbridge which originally spanned the moat, generations of Bedingfields have passed out, armed, though not with learning, to other battles than those waged with books,—but immovably steadfast in the twofold cause of the Monarchy and of the Faith.

That this fine Catholic family should still be quietly cherishing the Old Religion in a house built by an ancestor who had worn harness at the battle of Tewkesbury is a fact pleasing to all who shun blind Change, and who, uninfluenced by the sight of everything being turned upside down to reveal what may happen to be under it, still keep a respect for the stately families of England and for their even still more stately homes. In this quality the house of the Bedingfields shines pre-eminent. It has especially "the grand air": looks a place which has seen the ebb and flow of great events and given birth to a long succession of noble owners. It lays a lawful claim to nobility among mansions. Not quite a castle, it is still clearly a house built with strict regard to defensible purpose. And Oxburgh Hall has no mean collection of antiquarian treasures to defend, though they are never on any consideration whatever shown to a curious public.

The approach to the place is typical of the military genius of its founders. It has a martial air. The formidable-looking entrance to this treasure-house of historic memories and priceless family heirlooms opens the way, as has been said, to perfect antiquarian banquets—to any one, that is to say, who has the honour to be a visitor or the fortune to be possessor of a pass. But a dim suggestion occurs to the mind that it leads also to dungeons. Though not to the extent felt at first sight of Ightham (and other moated houses) on a dreary day, this fine specimen of its kind nevertheless breathes something ominous. The entrance is over a brick bridge coped with freestone. As is invariably the case, the original wooden drawbridge has long ago gone the way of all wooden bridges, in the boisterous and ghostly company of whole hosts of retainers, guests, and assailants, who in days long dead respectively raised it when the trumpet sounded the summons of arrival; waited impatiently for it to be raised, especially when the weather was rainy or the wind blew from the north; and were pushed off it into the moat in the act of trying to rush across. The visitor's way now lies through an archway in the main tower 22 feet long by 13. Four turrets flank the gateway. The two front ones rise 10 feet above the others, and plunge more than 80 feet down to their foundations in the moat.

An entrance having now been effected with no more offensive weapons than a portmanteau and an umbrella, the extent of the courtyard round which the house is built is fully seen. It looks to a practised eye (unassisted by a measuring tape) about 40 yards long, by 30 yards or so in breadth. On the south side of this courtyard, and immediately opposite the entrance gateway, stands the finest old Gothic hall, for its size, in England. Fifty-four feet long, 34 feet in breadth, and roofed with oak, it recalls, in the form of an exactly proportioned miniature, the great National Monument at Westminster, on which masterpiece, so far as style and form are concerned, it seems to have been intentionally modelled. Next to this masterpiece


Tower & Angle of North Front.

OXBURGH

of its kind (according to Cotman) the library calls for notice; not only for its great and rare collection of printed books, many of them properly reflecting the strictly Catholic views of the family, but also for a memento which eloquently proclaims that unswerving loyalty for which the Bedingfields have always been distinguished: a manuscript containing meditations on the Passion of Christ connects the story of Oxburgh with the great Civil War when the hopes of Charles the First, after long and bloody fluctuations, faded finally, and the flower of Royalist England went down before Cromwell's Ironsides at Naseby and Marston Moor. The then representative of the Bedingfields had, from the first, taken an active and gallant part in that great struggle; and the composition of this much and justly prized manuscript solaced the long hours of an imprisonment in the Tower of London.

To a year and three-quarters imprisonment as a punishment for loyalty was added the sequestration of the prisoner's estates. These were redeemed in the jolly times when, amidst the blazing of bonfires, the King enjoyed his own again and in the too seductive society of Barbara Villiers forgot what was due to other people. Sir Henry did not live to see this just and tardy restitution. He died in 1657. The year succeeding his own death was, however, a fatal one to his martyred master's arch-enemy. The Pale Horseman in this instance at all events distributed his rewards equally, and knocked at the Palace of the Lord Protector very shortly after his awful summons sounded at the ancestral home of the Bedingfields.

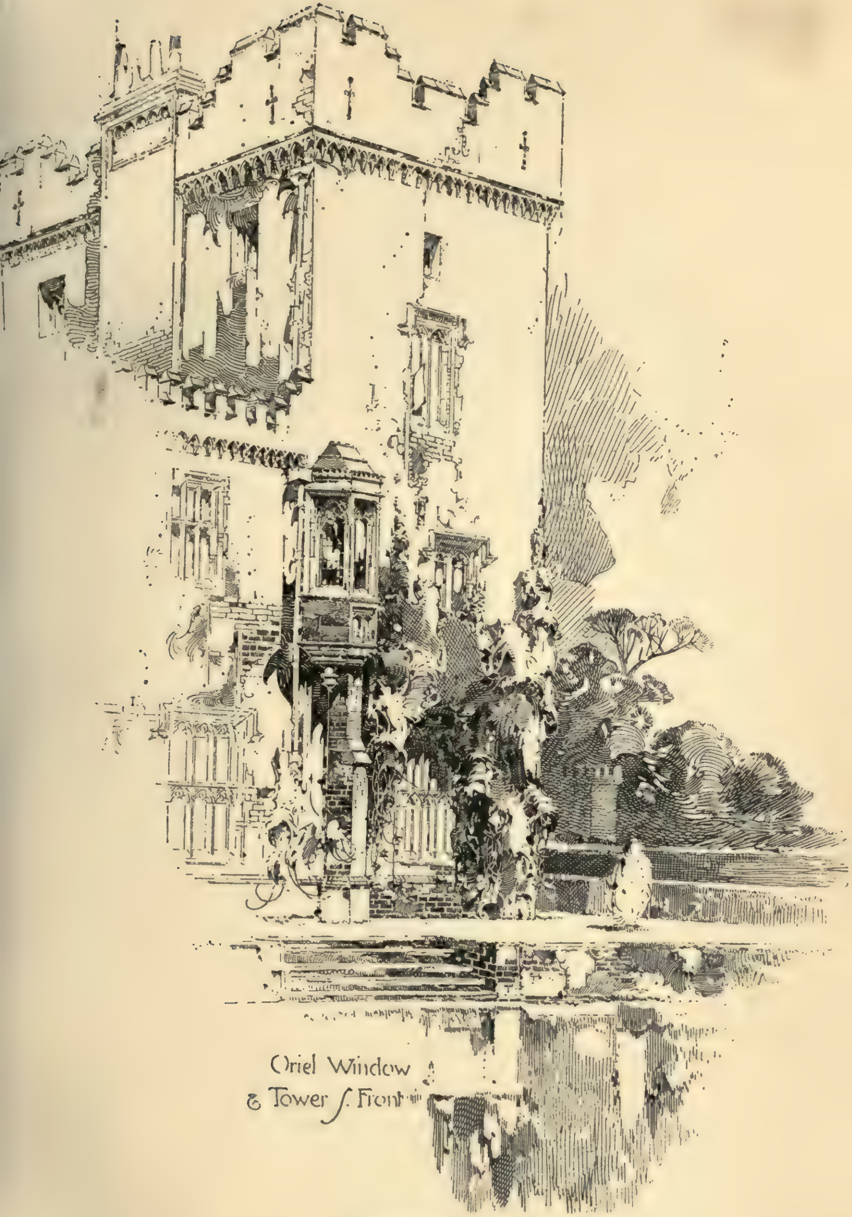
On August the 16th, 1658, the death of Lady Claypole, Cromwell's favourite daughter, gave the Regicide Protector a shock from which even his iron temperament failed to rally. Shortly afterwards the Quaker Fox saw the shaft of death go out against the usurper as he rode by at the head of his Life Guards down the long avenue of Hampton Court.

The way into Oxburgh Hall being also the way out of it, the opportunity now arises of studying the grand entrance gateway more carefully, to say nothing of various apartments in both towers. The unfolding of the richest treasures of the house will repay the research, though the price exacted is an ascent up some somewhat precipitous stairs. The gateway itself is one of the most interesting features of the building. It remains practically in the original state in which it stood when the fourth Edward lay dying and Caxton's printing press was at work in the Sanctuary of Westminster. Both of the flanking towers contain several rooms with windows carefully adjusted for the viewing of coming friend or foe, and ornamented with apertures through which the latter form of visitor could be dealt with with cross-bows, boiling pitch, or anything else offensive and handy. Architects will notice the peculiarity of the battlements of the tower. Two large chimneys have their base in the centre of the pediment. For the rest, brick is everywhere in evidence at Oxburgh. Even a spiral staircase in the tower on the right of the entrance is built of this essentially English material. Armed feet must often have in past days rung on these stairs, for they lead to the top of the building, from which stone copings could have been thrown down on to the upturned faces of too confident assailants in moments of stress and invention. The process was a common form of amenity in mediæval sieges (witness de Bracy's intended exploit of this kind at the siege of Torquilstone), though there is no record of Oxburgh having ever had to stand one. To return for a moment to architectural details. Quatrefoil apertures light this stair and tower and give further opportunity for cross-bow practice. There are four rooms in the tower on the left of the entrance, ornamented with coved brick roofs and projecting ribs.

A handsome room immediately over the arched entrance calls for more detailed notice. Fine brick has been used in its flooring, and a curious tapestry covers its walls. The motley group of kings, statesmen, and ladies who are represented in this work of art, busy at something desperate whose hidden object nobody can make out, once fastened their fixed and woolworked eyes on royal and Tudor slumbers. Henry the Seventh is said to have slept here. The occasion was, probably, that of his carefully recorded pilgrimage to Walsingham. This miserly King, who had so miraculously escaped Richard the Third's battleaxe on Bosworth Field, was not at the moment on avarice bent. He was indeed in search of further miraculous aid. He came to offer vows and prayers for help and deliverance at a shrine which was in those days almost as celebrated as that of Thomas à Becket. When Lambert Simnel's pretensions subsequently went down with the best blood of the West Country at the battle of Stoke, and when that fifteenth-century Claimant had discovered that he was not the Earl of Warwick after all, and was glad of a job as scullion in the King's kitchen, Henry showed, for so mean a man, some tangible tokens of gratitude for so fortunate an issue of affairs. He sent his banner as a thanks-offering to Our Lady of Walsingham, and a silver-gilt image of himself in a properly grateful posture of prayer. His slumbers at Oxburgh were probably easy after this relief from anxiety, unless they were disturbed by miserly regrets at having parted with some property. On rising next morning he had the opportunity of viewing the surrounding country through a noble window looking north, and of watching the bustle of a great house preparing a King's breakfast, through two bay windows looking into the courtyard.

This fine room, in which a King once slept, is naturally held in great veneration by the Bedingfields. It is named after the royal sleeper. The bed which he slept in, as well as the tapestry which watched over those august slumbers, are looked upon as heirlooms of the house. A Tudor always left his or her mark upon a place, especially when the King or Queen happened to be recumbent.

The green velvet curtains and coverlet of the bed, however, had no share in giving Henry the Seventh a comfortable night or the reverse; for its gold-threaded design, representing all manner of birds and beasts with their names inscribed under each of them to prevent any naturalist's mistake, is undoubtedly the


Oriel Window
& Tower S. Front

OXBURGH

work of his great-great-granddaughter. The deftness of the embroidery of itself suggests the unfortunate artist; the heart-stirring initials "M. S." proclaim her handiwork beyond doubt. But how the fortunes of Henry the Seventh and Mary Stuart came thus to be linked in a bed-coverlet at Oxburgh Hall is a moot point. Outside authorities are silent. And nobody inside is quite certain how it got into the house. The added name, however, of Elizabeth Shrewsbury to Mary Stuart's initials, marks a collaboration which may afford a clue to this mystery. Queen Elizabeth was once at Oxburgh on one of her progresses. She slept in the room over Henry the Seventh's. She may have had in her train the notorious Bess of Hardwicke in one of her intervals of favour, and the hard-featured, loud-voiced, red-haired Derbyshire brokeress of manors may have offered this memorial of Mary Stuart's industry at Sheffield or Wingfield Manor to Gloriana, who was never reluctant to grasp anything that she could lay hands on. All was fish that came to this Tudor's net. Coverlets and gallants' admiring glances were as acceptable to her as doubloons. Yet a revulsion may have seized even her on learning whose white and taper fingers had been at work on this especial coverlet. A ghost may have drawn aside the tapestried hangings of the royal bed and held up a menacing finger. Elizabeth, with all her free-thought in religious matters, was a believer in dreams. She would have ordered the coverlet made by that nightly visitant not to be packed up with her other belongings when the day came for leaving Oxburgh and the courtyard shone with the green and white liveries of her busied retinue preparing for departure and the trumpets were sounding to horse.

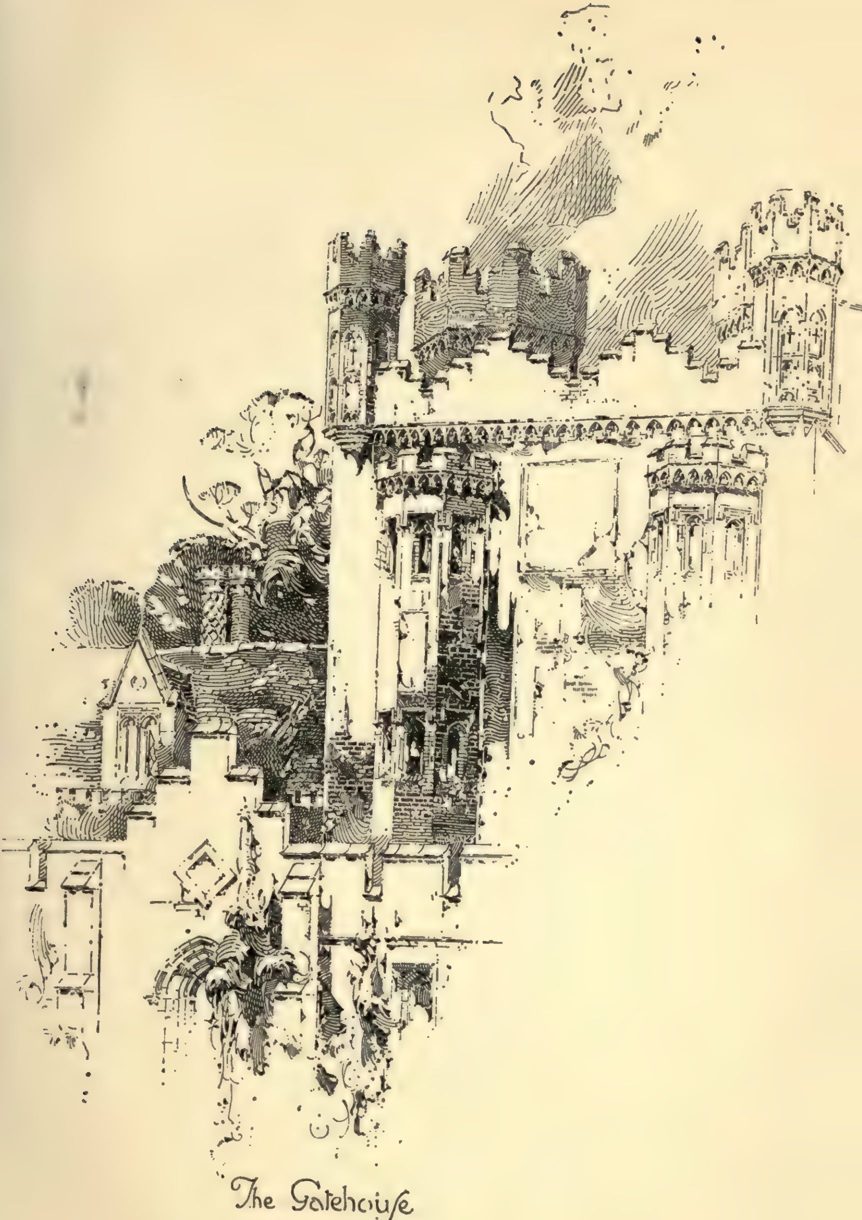
Other thoughts, besides speculations on a bed-coverlet, would have occupied the Queen's mind during her visit to this Norfolk home. Dreary days must have been recalled: days when her present host was her gaoler. The hospitalities of Oxburgh must have been darkened by memories of the Tower of London. The morning would have been remembered when Sir Henry Bedingfield, then in the first flush of success at Mary's gloomy Court, introduced himself as custodian to the imprisoned sister. The times were dark and full of danger. The axe streamed with blood on Tower Hill. It had already fallen on the white neck of Lady Jane Grey. Nobody could say who might not be the next victim. Many, including Elizabeth herself, feared the worst. When the stern representative of the Bedingfields, with all the grave honours of the Constableship fresh upon him, presented himself before his royal prisoner, Elizabeth probably thought that he had come to lead her on to that fatal green within the Tower where on a May morning eighteen years ago her own mother's head had fallen under the sword of the executioner of Calais. Sir Henry, she noticed, had brought a new guard of a hundred soldiers with him, clothed in blue. The moment was a doubtful one. But Elizabeth's lion heart rose at this uncertain prospect. Nor had she lost the use of her tongue. "Is Lady Jane's scaffold taken away yet?" she carelessly asked.

She would have remembered that incident in the midst of the Oxburgh festivities, and other hardships too, received at the hands of the stern gaoler, now the accommodating host. The interrupted game of chess at the wayside inn, whose conclusion she was not allowed to see, would have recurred to her, as such trifles often do. Elizabeth was anxious in the matter. Perhaps she had a small wager on the game. Perhaps some sinister political meaning was hidden in the moves not unconnected with a programme for escape. Anyhow, her keeper was obdurate. That too much attention had been paid to the Princess in that place, was Sir Henry's excuse for removing his royal prisoner from the room; and who won that game of chess Elizabeth never knew! This fact alone must have annoyed her, for she was all her life a speculator.

Another memory of the past may have crossed her mind as she was about to leave that Oxburgh where she had been so splendidly entertained. She may even have thought of it while she was doing her hair, since this trouble had to do with the toilet. While on her way from her prison at Woodstock (where she had whiled away the time by writing some very pretty verses) to another one, temporarily organized by Lord William at Ricot, a violent storm of wind showed so little respect for the divine right of Queens, even though only prospective ones, as to blow her head-dress off three times. Upon this she begged leave to retire to a nobleman's house which was in view of the scene of this disaster, for the simple purpose of repairing it. But Sir Henry, who seems to have suspected that armed help might be hid under a lady's dressing-table, refused this very reasonable request.

He suggested an adjacent hedgerow as a suitable *chambre de toilette*; and the greatest of the Tudors might have been seen crouched by the roadside doing her hair.

It can scarcely be wondered at that Elizabeth, when she came to her own, remembered such incidents of her past as these; that she rallied that inflexible custodian of days gone by, now turned into host; that in the presence of her crowded and gorgeous Court she called him "gaoler." The iron of adversity had entered into her soul, and she felt the prick of it even in the days of prosperity. She might, however, have borne in mind, when these rallying inclinations seized her (Elizabeth was a great tease), that Sir Henry Bedingfield had in those days of the Old Faith's brief revival looked upon her as a heretic, and, as such, the natural enemy of his munificent mistress. Some architectural adjuncts to the curiosities of Oxburgh Hall were at hand to strengthen this religious and historical suggestion. Two years having to pass before the advent of what Froude calls the Jesuit Invasion, two very remarkable hiding-places may not yet have been put to the use which was afterwards made of them. Nor on this occasion of Elizabeth's visit would she be likely to have clapped eyes on these ingenious contrivances destined in a short time so often to make the searchings of royal pursuivants of no avail. The troubled religious times were already beginning to cast their persecuting shadow over the country. The specimens of architectural occultism referred to, were not shown to Protestants—especially if they happened to be reign-


The Gatehouse

OXBURGH HALL

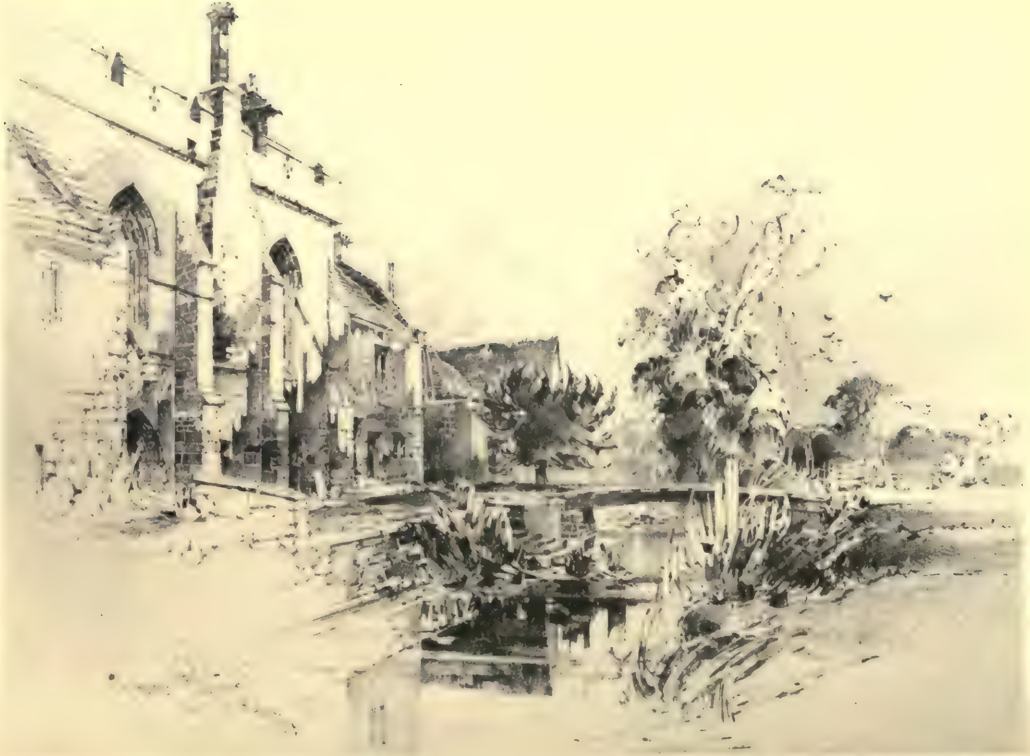
ing ones; and Elizabeth would have left the towers of Oxburgh behind her without seeing the ingenious hiding-place in the turret projecting from the east tower. This remarkable contrivance, which must have been often used to conceal a persecuted priesthood, is 6 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 7 feet in height. The entrance to it is through a small arched closet. Inside this closet, and concealed in the pavement, is a trap door formed of wooden frame enclosing bricks. Its centre is fixed on an iron axle. By a forcible pressure on one side of the trap door, the other side rises; and the door is so constructed and situated that it could never be discovered by accident. Nor would a second Priest's Hole, as they came in Persecution days to be called. The entrance to this one was beneath a fireplace. So secret was its contrivance that it positively took a demolition to lay it bare. And the family only realized that the place had hidden missionaries when the buildings on the south side of the court were pulled down. When this discovery was being made at Oxburgh the alliance of France and Spain with America was being sealed by the death of Chatham.

The departure of Elizabeth gives an opportunity of touching on other incidents in the history of the house. Its builder, Sir Henry Bedingfield, had not yet put the finishing touches to this noble monument of domestic architecture, when the baleful and distorted glance of Richard the Third, ranging among the gorgeously dressed attendants of his coronation, selected him as a worthy recipient of the honours of a Knight of the Bath. This ceremony completed, Richard set hurriedly out for the North of England, turning haggard looks on every messenger who came near him; closing his ears desperately to the rumours with which even the North Country rang, that the two young Princes had been murdered in the Tower. Fearful of news as he was, he strangely enough seized this opportunity of facilitating its transmission; and King's couriers, running regularly with letters from the North of England, marked the first step towards our penny post. I do not know whether Sir Henry followed the fortunes of his crook-backed master to the final arbitrament on Bosworth Field. If he did so, a striking example is furnished of the general union of hearts which followed the close of the Wars of the Roses, by Henry the Seventh's visit to Oxburgh two years after.

The slumbers of conquering Royalty which signalized this occasion have been referred to, and it is not necessary to disturb them again. No echoes of the great struggle lately ended broke the quiet of that social function; but the courtyard of Oxburgh rang to armed heels sixty odd years after, when Sir Henry, son of Sir Edmund, mustered 150 men and rode to Framlingham on a rainy July day in defence of Queen Mary and the Catholic Religion. The successful career of this soldier and politician has been traced through two reigns. The austerities of Mary's Court, and the spacious times of Elizabeth, seem to have equally suited Sir Henry's firm yet cautious temper. Strict Catholic as he was, he contrived without offence to his own susceptibilities to thrive as a Protestant courtier, though the sword and lance which had gleamed at Framlingham lay long rusting through those piping times of peace.

Sir Henry, second of that name, took those doughty weapons down from the Oxburgh walls when Charles the First's standard was unfolded on that stormy August afternoon at Nottingham, and when families were divided against each other and brother fought against brother in the long struggle of the Civil War. No such divided purpose affected the undeviating loyalty of the Bedingfields of those stormy times. The head of the house followed the fortunes of his King through many a stricken field, till the royal cause was lost beyond present redemption on the field of Naseby. The stone walls of the Tower and the sequestration of his estates rewarded the Cavalier's loyal service, without being able to impair his constancy to a lost cause. And though he died without seeing the glories of the Restoration and the restitution of the estates which he had so chivalrously staked for his master, he never bemoaned the misfortunes which had followed that gallant and self-sacrificing loyalty.

The spirit of this departed Cavalier seems to animate this old house which his loyalty sacrificed: to outshine the honours of Henry the Seventh's stay under its roof, and the glories of Elizabeth's progress. Others among the moated houses of England have enjoyed distinctions such as these; have done the State some service; and as a reward, have sunned themselves in the smiles of Royalty. But the service has been given by a varying race of owners, and the recipients of it have not always been sure of the continuance of the gift. To Oxburgh Hall has been granted a fuller share of honour among houses. No one but a Bedingfield has ever lived under its roof. And no passing change of feeling or of fancy has for a moment interrupted the Bedingfields' staunch loyalty to the Monarchy, or their unalterable fidelity to their Faith.



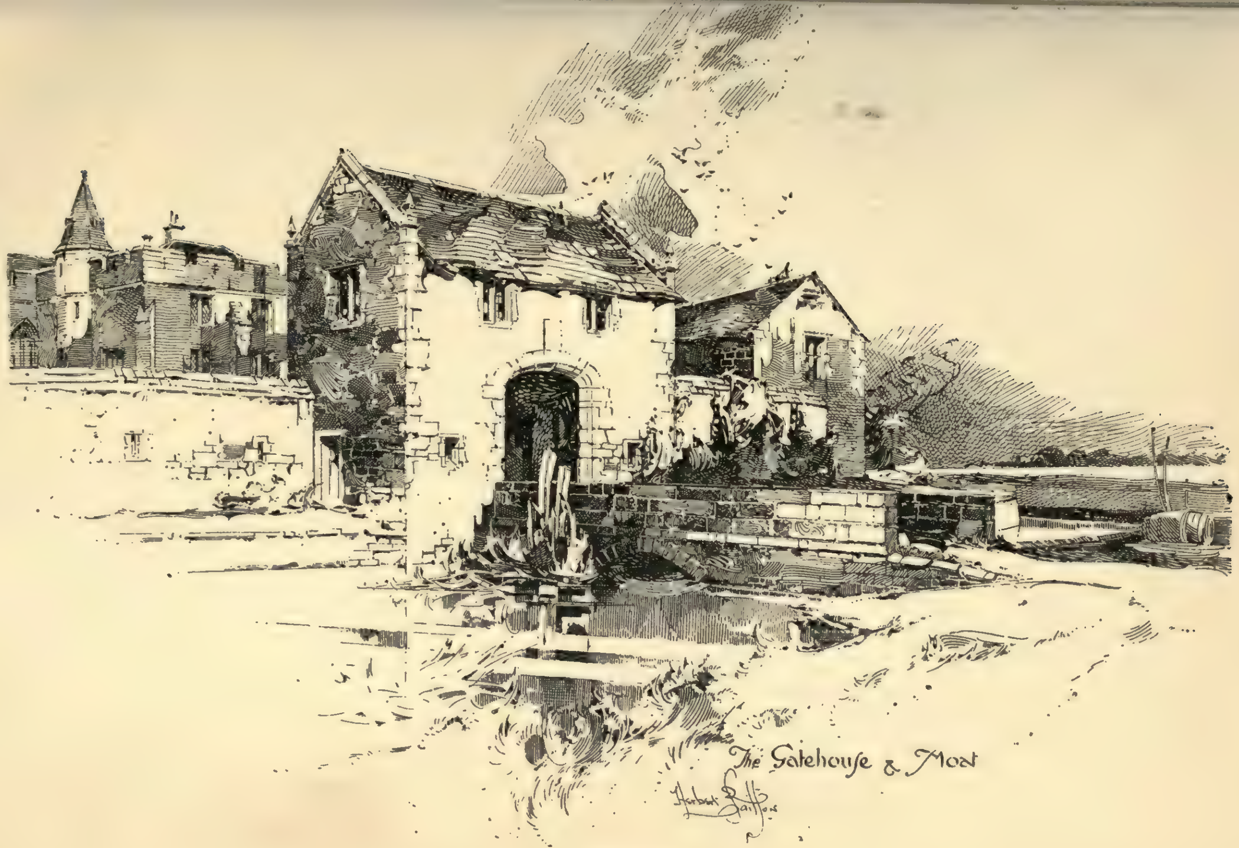
MARKENFIELD HALL

III

MARKENFIELD HALL

THE licence to crenellate this moated house, which lies three miles south-west of Ripon, was granted by Edward the Second in 1310; but the building, as it now stands, was probably completed in Edward the Third's time and by the same master architect and artist in stone who had just finished the grand restoration at Ripon Minster. The mouldings and pyramidal turrets of both buildings are practically the same. With the exception of Aydon Castle in Northumberland, which can hardly be said to attain to the dignity of being truly moated, Markenfield Hall is as good an example of a perfect house of the period as can be seen in England. It stands four-square to all the winds that blow; is surrounded by a moat still full of water; and though a certain stern aspect which it wears might entitle it to be called a castle (the incomparable Dalgetty, in the *Legend of Montrose*, would have been very strong on this point), it is in fact merely a house of a transition period in domestic architecture built with some attention to security. In this respect it may be fairly considered as a typical building of those times which brought the moated house into being. These buildings tell in stone and timber the slowly civilizing influences which were gradually stealing into England's life. The grosser barbarities of Feudalism were beginning to disappear before a growing feeling of security which slowly but surely paved the way to a civilizing social intercourse. Country neighbours began to call on each other without drawn swords in place of visiting-cards, or spear-heads to represent writing materials. Oubliettes disclosed their unsuspected depths less frequently to undesirable visitors and to cantankerous tradesmen calling for their last account, which too often was there paid in full. Polish began to appear when Edward the Third was King; and these moated houses with it. They represent the genius of architecture in a pose of pause. They hesitate picturesquely between a hospitable confidence and an armed precaution.

Markenfield Hall is full of memories of the sturdy race of founders who gave it their name. They had lived on the land on which the house is built so far back as the reign of Henry the First. They were only severed from it by the relentless confiscation which followed an abortive conspiracy. The armorial bearings of this fine race of valiant soldiers are to be seen in the Oratory of the house in connection with a piscina highly enriched: and heralds thus read them: —Quarterly one and four; on a *bond* three bezants Markenfield; second, a *fesse* between six escallops; third, three conic helmets. Supporters, two stags *regardant*. Crest, a hind's head *affrontée*. But Heraldry stepped in late to make this decoration. The device had been seen emblazoned on the shield of


The Gatehouse & Moat
Herbert Railton

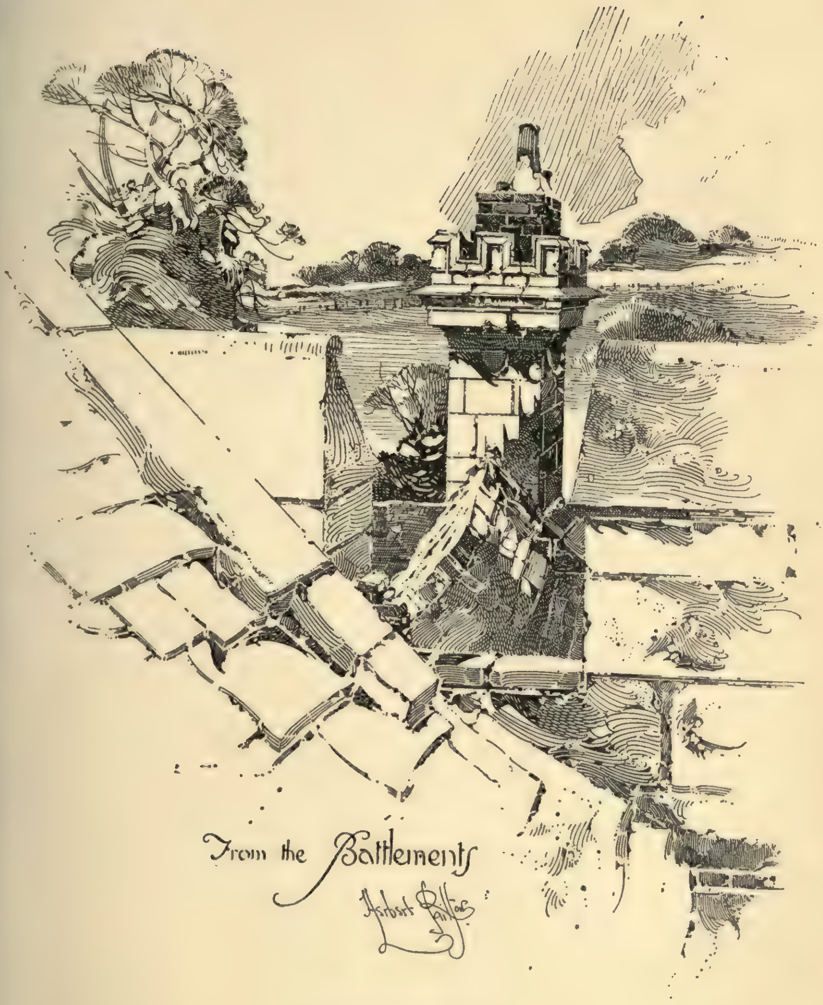
MARKENFIELD

the family through a long succession of stricken fields in which the representative of the Markenfields fought always in the front rank. Further proofs of the martial leaning of the family are to be seen on the north side of the courtyard, where a number of heraldic shields conspicuously placed give further details of the house's story (to those who can read them), or would do so, if four of them had not been irretrievably defaced. The fifth shield, however, bears the family arms, the sixth a cross flory, the seventh three mitres, the eighth an eagle displayed, the ninth five fusils each with an escallop for Plumpton. This departed race of warriors were mighty hunters too, and they very likely indulged in impromptu steeplechases on their way to battle, or on their sprightly expeditions to course wild boars. They had the opportunity of looking on such gatherings in the courtyard as we now call Meets—men, dogs, horses, and servants handing round refreshments—through two long windows, divided by mullions into two lights, with trefoil heads, or, after ascending a winding staircase enclosed in a turret, from the battlement of the Castle. Spofforth Castle shows a similarly constructed way of ascending to an upper storey. From each point of vantage, unless caution is exercised in dealing with the stairs, a descent at express speed can be made. At Markenfield, if you should be so unfortunate as to fall down the Baronial stair, you will find yourself in the Baronial stable.

A comment on mediæval housekeeping at once suggests itself. The fondness which sporting Barons of the Middle Ages had for their horses, as well as an imperviousness to certain scents which rise from the place where they are stalled, is clearly shown at Markenfield, and in many other houses of the period, by the stables being placed in immediate juxtaposition to the dwelling-house. These warriors and sportsmen of Edward the Third's time were not afflicted with nerves of any kind, certainly not with too sensitive olfactories. They not only did not mind the stable smell, but they particularly liked to have their horses at hand for a speedy mounting. And that the Markenfields were especially fond of their horses is not only shown by the fact that Sir Ninian, one of the most distinguished of the race, left his favourite charger as a mortuary to the Monastery of Ripon, but also by the perfectly equal division of the house into stable and family residence. Man and beast enjoyed the same measure of shelter and food in this Yorkshire home. The Markenfields were content with the north and east corners of the quadrangle to eat, drink, and sleep in. They left the south and west sides to their four-footed friends.

People who lived at the beginning of the last century remembered the existence of certain large buildings and offices standing outside the moat. And they have attributed these outside foundations to stables. There is, however, as little to be seen of these buildings now as was ever to be seen of this purpose to which they are supposed to have been put. Stables on the other side of the moat are appendages of much later moated houses than Markenfield, and are the buildings of a much later generation of owners. Elizabethans may have developed a finer sense of smell, as they developed a premature craving to drive on impossible roads in unwieldy coaches. Nocturnal raids were things of the past in Gloriana's golden days. Everybody pined for a carriage, just as most people nowadays pine for a motor car; and the distance between the hall door and the coach-house did not so much matter. But no proprietor of a moated house who lived in the days of Crécy and Neville's Cross, of the Peasants' Revolt, or of the first battle of St. Albans (to say nothing of the second), when offensive visits were to be expected at any moment from armed neighbours labouring under different political views, or from starving labourers intent on equality and loot,—no proprietor of these merry days, I say, would have dreamt for a moment of allowing himself to be separated from his horses by a broad sheet of water, even if the drawbridge of the house was always in a working state. Accidents happened before Waterloo. Drawbridges may have gone wrong even in the days of Crécy.

There was a very ponderous one at Markenfield in the old days of the house, which must have taken a lot of lifting when the lord of the Castle had to cry "Up drawbridge, grooms!" too suddenly. But it has long since passed into the limbo of things forgotten, together with the portcullis, which in a similar desperate state of domestic affairs would have been ordered to fall at express speed. There is, I believe, only one moated house in England which still keeps, and in working order too, one of these silent witnesses to the insecurity of the times. Immovable stone has everywhere else taken the place of the wooden structures whose sole reason for existing lay in their capacity of being moved up and down with the utmost speed and at a moment's notice. If anything went wrong with that lift of the Middle Ages, assailant and assailed were likely to enter the house together and fighting hand to hand. But time rounds all; and the time came, even in the history of moated houses, when an undesirable visitor ceased to be so pushing, and had left off wearing armour, and when for the purpose of disconcerting him, it was only necessary to slam the front door in his face. A porter, well instructed in his art, would bawl at the same time, from the inner side of it, that you were "not at home,"—a process which with slight reforms obtains at the present day. But even under these improved conditions of amenity it was evidently felt necessary that, with the drawbridge a thing of the past, the door should be of such sturdy structure as to prevent all possibility of extra persistent visitors breaking it in. "Not at home" was not always taken as a signal for going away in those days any more than it is now. And it is perhaps in consequence of this necessary saving clause for keeping their interiors free from undesirables, that these moated houses nearly all possess doors of such formidable strength as not only to have resisted the indignant blows of baulked afternoon callers, but the more ponderous assaults of time itself. They are most of them the original doors made out of stout English oak. Even in such an early specimen


From the Battlements
Herbert Railton

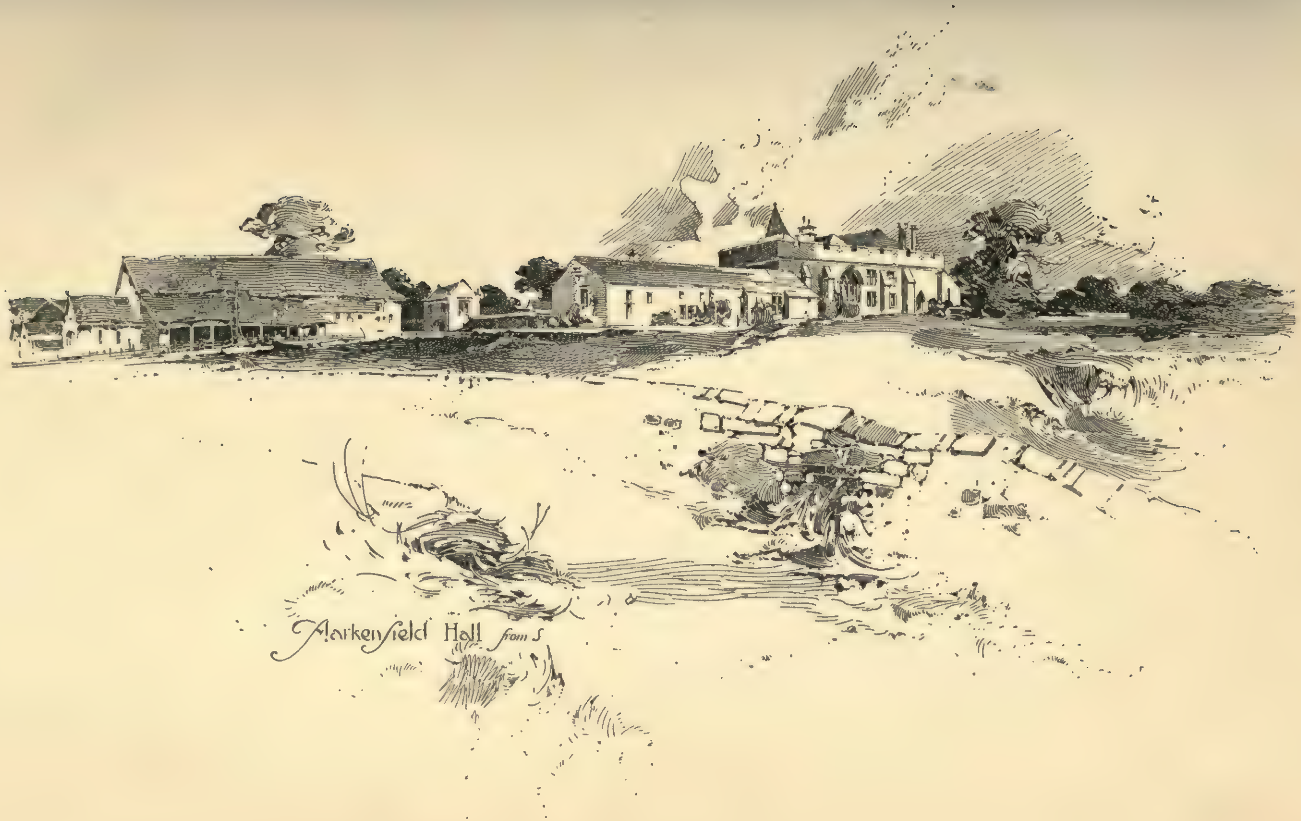
MARKENFIELD

of a moated house as Markenfield, though the original door is gone, its head of oak curiously carved is still in existence, stamped of course with the family arms.

The history of this family has now to be traced. It shows itself, as so often happens, a history whose tendencies and whose character seem reflected, as if by deliberate intention, from the walls which once environed it. The aspect of Markenfield Hall is purely and nobly Baronial. Its possessors will be seen instinct with the stern yet gorgeous characteristics of the Barons' Age. So long, however, is the line of their distinguished descent, and so equally shared by all of them were the qualities of a sturdy independence and of a courage amounting almost to ferocity, that it will be as hard to avoid sameness in the record as it is difficult to say where to begin it. Perhaps for the purpose of illustrating Markenfield Hall it may be advisable to begin with some mention of its builder. This will be to begin with the beginning. His name was Thomas, though there were Thomases and Ninians before him, as there were Thomases and Ninians after. Sir Thomas the builder held the highest reputation as a soldier during the reign of Edward the Third, which numbered the sounding names of Crécy and Poitiers among its victories, and set up as model for its typical commander the chivalrous personage of the Black Prince. With such an example to copy, military aspirants had to aim high, and Sir Thomas Markenfield showed prominently in the competition long before he was thirty-nine years old. Details of his individual efforts in the foreign wars are lacking, for war correspondents were not in existence in those days, and bulletins were not very full. Widely acknowledged reputation for courage, however, may be put to Sir Thomas's account, together with the fact that he married a wife who not only had great possessions but a very pretty name. Dionisia she was called! And a certain ring about it suggests that she may have been of a tyrannical disposition. She lies by her martial husband's side in the family chapel of Ripon Minster. So does Sir Thomas Markenfield the second, who married Ellen, daughter of Sir John Hotham; so do several more of these dauntless soldiers, who established quite a national reputation for the gorgeous ornamentation of their armour. The crests of the Markenfields were loftier than the crests of other Knights. And the ghastly and undeviating way in which they dealt death on any person holding opposite views to theirs and who had the bad luck to cross their path, was a matter for shuddering comment.

Some generations in so consistent a pedigree of pugnacity may be passed over, and pause made at the mention of Sir Thomas Markenfield of Markenfield (the third), whose story shows some slight change in the family tendency, though it does not seem altogether certain that the change was towards edification. This bold Knight, whose wife's name was Margaret, is said to have been a favourite of Edward the Fifth, though this seems impossible. A volume of grants in the British Museum shows him the recipient of an annuity of a hundred marks during his life and six manors in Somersetshire. Considering that Edward was only King two months under a Protectorate, it is probable that these gifts were made by the hand of the Protector, and that Protector Richard the Third. Sir Thomas was at all events High Sheriff of York when the humpbacked tyrant met his death on Bosworth Field, shouting "Treason! treason!" and levelling Henry the Seventh's standard-bearer. Henry had taken two opportune steps backward at that fatal moment, or he would never have written "King" after his name. The exact date of this third Thomas Markenfield's death is not certain. But the date of his will, 8th April 1497, suggests that, if he had been a favourite of Richard or Edward, either his political sympathies had veered to the victorious side, or that he had propitiated Henry the Seventh by a large donation to that royal miser's strong-box or by an undisclosed act of political perfidy. He desired, in his own quaint way of spelling, "to be beried afore the Awter of Saynt Androwe in the Monastry of Saynt Wilfrede in Ripon emonge the berialle of his ancestors."

The most remarkable thing about him, however, was that certain trait of treachery in his character above noticed, which, showing itself first of all in his nimble adoption of the character of political turncoat, was transmitted to his descendants in that more manly though more fatal form which, in a future generation, made Markenfields into conspirators. Sir Thomas's son, the celebrated Sir Ninian, avoided this taint (just as sometimes the second son in a gouty family escapes the disease). He shone pre-eminently as a soldier, and commanded at Flodden with Lord Clifford, where he upheld the military honour of his family "in armour coat of cunning work," and dealt out a quality of lance-thrusts and sword-blows which had not before come under the notice of James the Fourth's mountaineers. He also in softer fields of action gave further evidence of his loyalty by marrying Eleanor, daughter of Lord Clifford, and his wife's mother was cousin-german to Henry the Seventh. But the taint of treachery is like that gout to which reference has been made. Once fixed in a family it sometimes skips a generation, only to break out in the succeeding one with an increased virulence. And so, though Sir Ninian, son of a turncoat, had escaped his father's weakness, and had remained a warrior, Sir Thomas (the fourth, and Sir Ninian's son) inherited his grandfather's failings in a more marked degree, and lent his military or his designing capacities to the service of treason. He is supposed to have had his fingers in nearly every rebellion in the latter part of Henry the Eighth's reign. He fed with counsel or money the revolt which broke out in Lincolnshire. He covertly ministered to the religious and agrarian discontent which set Yorkshire in arms. His motto was not exactly Lord Hussey's, who was heard to say, "The world will never mend till we fight for it," for his aim was rather to let other people do the fighting, while he reaped the results of their strenuous efforts. But with all his astuteness he narrowly escaped being taken red-handed as an active participator in the Pilgrimage of Grace. He was



Markenfield Hall from S

suspected of having followed the banner bearing the host, the chalice, and the seven wounds of Christ, through many a Yorkshire hamlet. It was believed that he had much to do with the enrolment of those thirty thousand tall and well-horsed men who mustered on the banks of the Don. The arrest of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the executions of Lords Darcy, Hussey, and the Abbots of Barlings, Whalley, Woburn, and Sawley saw this Thomas Markenfield still living in immunity, and still secretly conspiring. How he managed to escape from a vengeance whose ruthless severity covered Yorkshire with gibbets remains one of those mysteries which are not always to be discovered in State papers. But he died in his bed at Markenfield on 18th April 1550, and is said to have attributed his political backslidings to the religious zeal of his wife.

Her name was Margaret, and she was the daughter of John Norton, Esquire of Norton. And there is this to be said of Sir Thomas's somewhat tardy plea: no family in England was more celebrated than these Nortons for their devotion to the Old Faith. But the mother's religious enthusiasm and the father's more worldly zeal worked with final and disastrous effect on the fortunes of their eldest son and heir. His name also was Thomas (the fifth). He was only seventeen when he married Isabel, daughter of Sir William Ingleby of Ripley, and he was only seventeen when he set out on that road of conspiracy and rebellion which led by the strait and narrow way to the ruin of his house. No man who conspired for Mary Stuart seems ever to have had a head upon his shoulders. Northumberland and Westmoreland were no exceptions to the rule, though the Rising of the North which is named after them is said to have been in reality planned by young Thomas Markenfield and one of the Swinburnes, who supplied what there was of brains in an enterprise to which the two Earls merely played the part of figureheads. Into this disastrous movement, which he is supposed to have set on foot, young Markenfield threw himself, with all the courage and energy of his forebears, but with none of his father's faculty for urging others forward while discreetly drawing back himself. Clad in the splendid armour always associated with his house, young Markenfield heard the bells of Tadcaster ringing backwards, entered Durham riding by the side of Westmoreland and Northumberland, saw the Prayer Book torn to pieces in Durham Cathedral, and attended the celebration of the Mass. Doncaster presently resounded to the cry of "Reduce all causes of religion to the old usage and custom." And there was probably no man who believed more firmly than Markenfield that "there were not ten men who approved of Elizabeth's religious proceedings," till he and his enthusiastics arrived before York and encountered Sussex. Before the military dispositions of that sturdy and plain-spoken veteran the army of the rebel Earls melted like snow. Nobody seems to know why they went, though where they went was soon within the knowledge of an avenging Government, and a Markenfield for the first time in the family history found himself in chains. His extreme youth is put forward as the reason of his escaping the death penalty. But the great extent of his estates helped to propel Elizabeth gently forward on the path of mercy. Markenfield Hall and its broad acres were confiscated by the Crown, and the last of his race died twenty-three years after, broken down by poverty and neglect, heart-sick for the loss of his home, and embittered by corruptions and the official neglect of the Spanish military authorities under whose command he had fought as an exiled soldier of fortune.

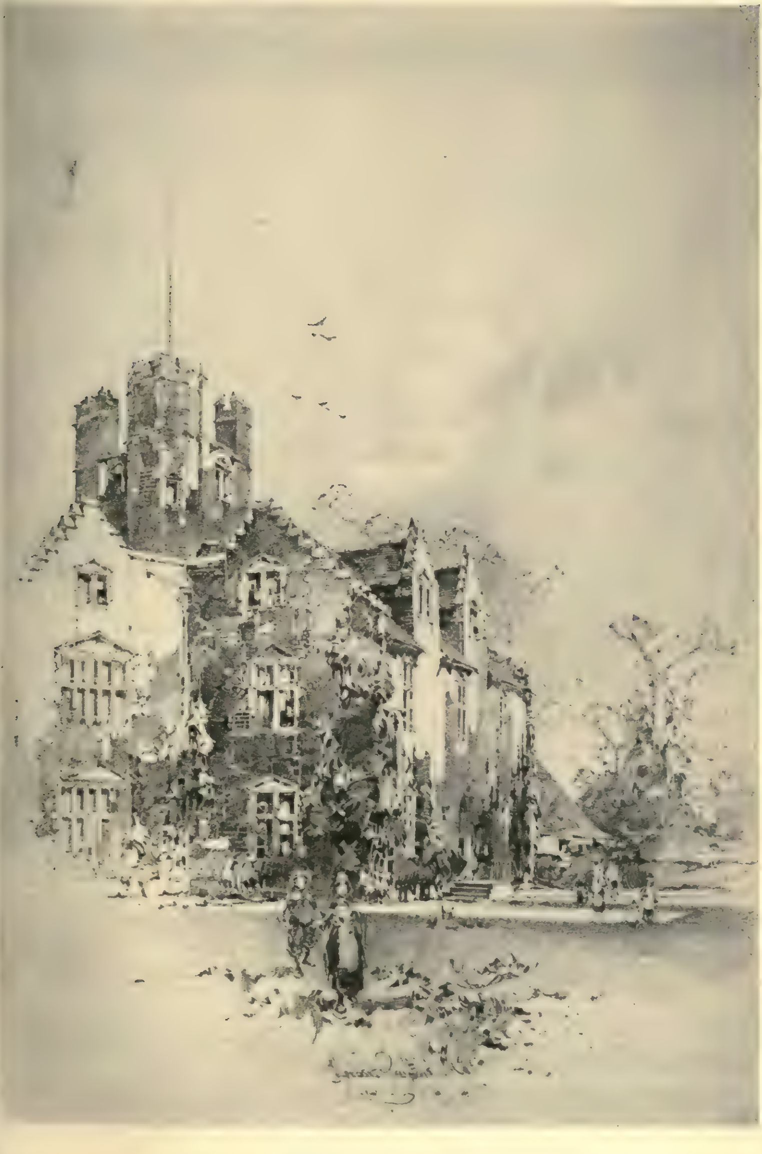
The attainder and exile of this last representative of the Markenfields bring the record of Markenfield Hall to its fatal and melancholy close. Those hireling footsteps treading the old Yorkshire house must have sounded across the seas and have reached the ears of the melancholy and pining exile: must have added the final drops to an already brimmed chalice of despair. They banish all thoughts of the after-history of the house; forbid all details of an alien though distinguished ownership; though it included the widely respected names of the Grantleys, and, in an ancestor to the celebrated Duke of Bridgewater, a Lord Chancellor of England.

IV

BISHAM

THERE is a picture in the dining-room at Bisham which remains a more vivid memory than the gigantic trees, the projecting oriels, the tall tower of the house, the conventual barn of Spanish chestnut, the old-world and moated garden, the broad sweep of the noble river, which is the admiration of all lovers of the Thames and which, to those who have never seen it, is made familiar by the genius of De Wint. The picture is the portrait of a lady wearing the coif, weeds, and wimple allowed to a Knight's widow in the days of Elizabeth. A certain spectral effect is lent to this painting by the lady's strangely white face and hands. The lady of this portrait, painted in the austere style of the period, who put on these widow's weeds three hundred and forty-two years ago, when Queen Elizabeth was thinking of opening the Royal Exchange, and Lord Darnley was meditating through dark and storm-riven nights the murder of Rizzio, looks as if she might have sat to the artist who painted her, as model for a ghost.

It is in this character that she is said to still haunt one of the Bisham bedrooms with a spectral basin



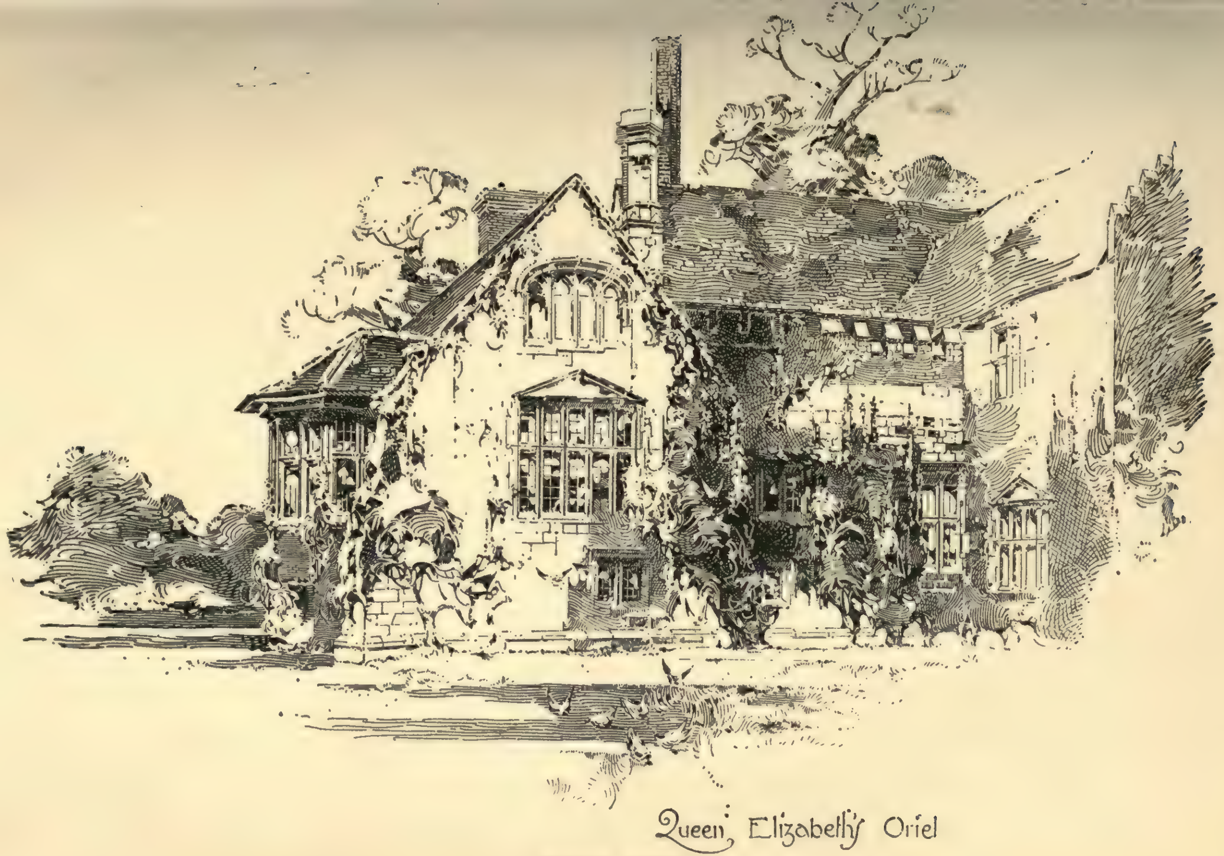
BISHAM ABBEY

moving before her, in which she appears, like another Lady Macbeth, to be perpetually trying to wash her hands. Such ghostly ablutions are needed, if the legend of the house is to be believed. It is said that the original of the eerie portrait in the Bisham dining-room beat one of her children to death because he could not write a line in his copy-book without making a blot. Our twentieth-century imagination, or rather, our twentieth-century lack of it, reels at the record of such a cold-blooded crime as well as at its reported chastisement. That the wife of that Sir Thomas Hoby who died while performing the duties of England's Ambassador in France, and who could herself write letters on affairs of state to Burleigh, and compose epitaphs in Greek, Latin, and English, should be guilty of such an act of brutality seems improbable: that she should still walk the scene of the reported infamy seems more improbable still.

With the exception of the members of a certain learned society, and a few stray members of the Episcopal Bench, no people believe in ghosts in these days, and those who do, unlike Doctor Johnson, pretend not to be afraid of them. This Berkshire ghost story will therefore need some digesting. And yet a singular discovery made so recently as sixty-seven years ago, seems to lend some colour to a tale which on such windy nights as favour the discussion of such topics is the common talk of village ale-benches for miles round the countryside. I do not know whether the Psychical Research Society has investigated the original story, or has probed the recent discovery which seems to lend it an air of truth. But here is the fact, and it is very much at their service. Sixty-seven years ago, then, when England, France, Portugal, and Spain joined hands in the Quadruple Alliance, and British guns were thundering before the walls of Acre, a quantity of children's copy-books of the time of Elizabeth were discovered at Bisham. The fact of their discovery was not in itself remarkable, nor perhaps was the fact that they were found pushed into the rubble between the joists of the floor, as if some one had no further need for them and wanted to get rid of them in a hurry. It was the condition of one of the copy-books which helps the ghost story. It suggested in no uncertain form the motive for this alleged Elizabethan murder. It had clearly belonged to a child who could not write a single line without making a blot. Rarely has there been seen such a saturnalia of ink-stains. Surely this is a "point" for apparitions!

The cause of the ghostly whiteness of the Elizabethan widow's face, as she looks down from the walls of the Bisham dining-room, having been now suggested, and Lady Hoby's supposed guilt pushed a little more forward into the light of possibility, it becomes time to turn to other pages of the history of her connection with this house, and to catalogue certain various virtues and characteristics of hers which were real and imposing enough. But before a still lingering suspicion gives place to a more reluctant eulogy, a certain remarkable trait in the lady's character may be noticed—a trait not by any means necessarily harmful, but most decidedly ominous, and largely tending to help the rumours which have gathered through the centuries about the ghostly-looking portrait. This Lady Hoby (she was a great herald) showed throughout her life an unpleasant interest in all things pertaining to death and the dead. She had a kind of passion for funerals. Her pleasure in writing epitaphs was a joy very real. She was always reading aloud a letter which she had received from Elizabeth condoling with her on her husband's death. Guests at Bisham came to look upon this reading almost in the light of Family Prayers. They closed their eyes, sat down, and listened or not as the case might be. Nor was this continual reading of the letter a sufficient salve. Not content with putting up a tombstone to her husband, she had to put one up at the same time to his deceased half-brother. Now the funereal pen was taken grimly in hand. The clothing of three languages was required for two epitaphs, which she took as much glee in composing as other people would have taken in writing epigrams. The ordering of pompous obsequies was her delight. Nor was her pleasure confined to arranging funerals for other people, since just before she died, she took particular care about the ordering of her own. She wrote a long letter in a trembling hand to Sir William Dethick, Garter King-of-Arms, asking what number of mourners were due to her calling, and inquiring as to such lively matters as the hearse, the heralds, and the black hangings in the church. This lifelong absorption of Lady Hoby in all things to do with the graveyard adds a properly suggestive tinge to the ghost story. With her strangely white face and hands, she still dominates Bisham.

She came there as the bride of Thomas Hoby on June the 27th, 1558, being the third daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke of Gidea Hall, Essex, and was thirty years of age. Her beautiful new home had recently been rebuilt. But, in its banqueting hall, 60 feet long, with dark oak gallery and buttery hatch, it associated itself with a much earlier building. The fine room in question is an enduring monument to Montacute Earl of Salisbury, whose son fought at Poitiers eighteen years after. Bisham was a priory of Augustine canons in those days, and the hero of Poitiers came here to take leave of some friends he had among them, previous to setting out for the Holy Sepulchre. He also had a daughter who was a nun in a neighbouring convent, and as an additional encumbrance, a squire in his train, who was in love with the daughter. An elopement in a boat, conducted in quite a Drury Lane melodrama manner, was intercepted at Marlow. The fugitive fair one was sent back to her convent. The military lover, in an attempt to escape from Bisham Abbey tower, where he had been imprisoned, enjoyed an even worse experience. A rope broke as he was trying to lower himself from an upper window, and the fall which followed broke nearly every bone in his body. Upon this, he gave up matrimonial designs and became a monk. Quite a Berkshire Abelard and Héloise episode! With her tendency to brood upon churchyards and ecclesiastical matters, the new bride at Bisham would have listened eagerly to such household stories as these.


Queen Elizabeth's Oriel

BISHAM ABBEY

Bisham had been once a Preceptory of the Knights Templar, and the military genius of those soldier-priests still survives in the moat of their own construction which surrounds the house and grounds. This famous band of Crusaders had made Bisham one of their headquarters in those monstrous and seldom-studied days of Stephen, when men were hung up all over the country by their hands and feet, with lighted fires under them, and David, King of Scotland, in vain tried to pierce through the English infantry which rallied doggedly round the ship's mast decorated with a consecrated wafer, which gave the name to the Battle of the Standard. The Knights Templar left Bisham two hundred and seventy years afterwards, when Piers Gaveston was ruling England by an extremely offensive personal influence over Edward the Second; and when, for the alleged introduction of more of the duties of the hearth into those of the cloister than befitted a company of military priests, their celebrated order was suppressed. Lady Hoby, whose knowledge of history was as extensive as her knowledge of hatchments and funereal rites, would have relished such a chapter of the past as this. It indeed lay spread before her in the pavements and corridors of Bisham, and whispered its occult secrets in the faint murmurs of the moat.

But Lady Hoby was a blue stocking of the sixteenth century in the strictest sense of the word; she could look elsewhere for literature than to the storied walls of her new home. Her husband's half-brother, Sir Philip Hoby (the previous owner of the estate), had not only acted as Ambassador of England resident at the Court of the great Emperor Charles the Fifth, and also received in that capacity one of the few State papers issued during the nine days' reign of Lady Jane Grey, but he had also been described by Lord Burghley as an amiable and cultured man. He was furthermore an intimate friend of Titian. (Sir Philip, being gouty, used to repair to Padua as well as to Pau for a cure.) And in a further exercise of his powers as a patron of the Arts he procured for Pietro Aretino a gratuity from Henry the Eighth, as a reward for a Dedication. Such was the diplomatic and literary reputation of Lady Hoby's half-brother by marriage. Her own husband, Sir Thomas Hoby (he was knighted at Greenwich seven years after the wedding), shone perhaps rather as a diplomat than as a friend of authors, and perhaps as a soldier more than either of the two. He had no sooner been sent as Ambassador to France than his diplomatic instincts, or more probably his military ones, almost brought about a rupture between that country and his own. When he landed at Calais Haven, in solemn Ambassadorial state, a peccant though not aimless soldier at the Town Gate proffered a new form of diplomatic salute by shooting the English flag through in two places. Sir Thomas Hoby threw diplomacy into the Straits of Dover, and took a very high hand. Redress for the insult was demanded in terms so arrogantly offensive that they might well have embroiled two nations in an endless and aimless war. But truth will out, even in a Diplomatic Mission, and it slowly but surely became evident that the outraged Ambassador was not only intent on an apology, but was also possessed of a desire to view the town's new fortifications. A laboured expression of regret was given. The permit to view was not granted. Sir Thomas only got as far as Paris after this rebuff. He died there, on 13th July 1566, and was buried at Bisham.

It was on this melancholy occasion that Lady Hoby (the original of the portrait with such strangely white face and hands) gave full vent to her fixedly funereal fancies. She not only instantly had her husband's body brought over from Paris and erected a monument to him, but set up one at the same time to her deceased husband's half-brother, and thus killed two birds, who were dead already, with one stone. The epitaph in three languages which has been referred to already, summarizes in the following couplet this funereal double event (English version):—

> "Give me, O Lord, a husband like to Thomas,
> Or else restore me to my husband Thomas."

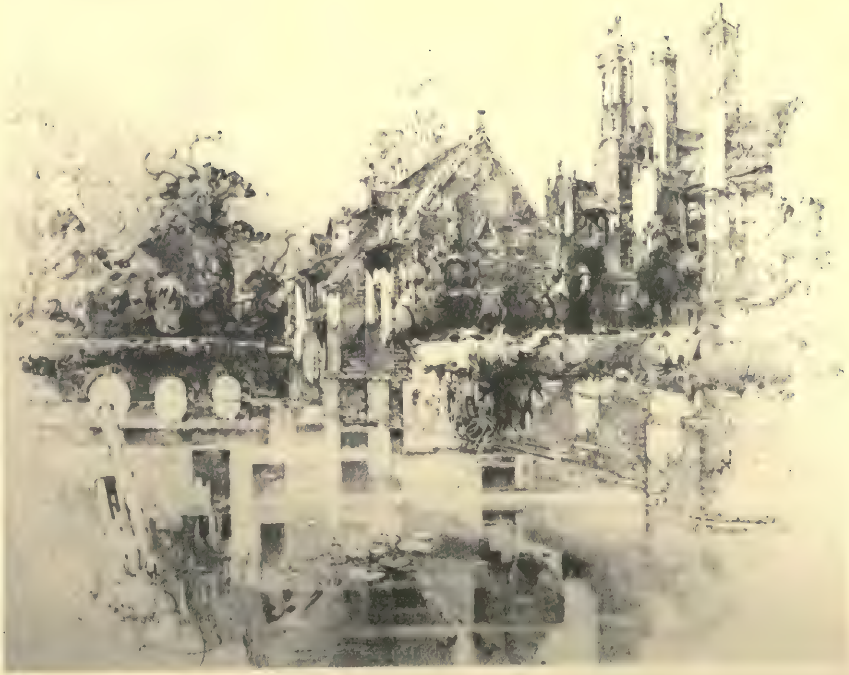
Providence failing to give a favourable reply to either of these two requests, Lady Hoby took her matrimonial matters into her two hands, and after a decent interval married Lord John Russell. Her literary instincts, however, remained unimpaired. Their political bent shows itself in a series of letters written to Lord Burghley between the years 1547 and 1580: their religious side shows itself so late as the year 1605 in a translation from the French. A treatise *On a way of Reconciliation touching the* *true nature and substance of the Body and Blood of Christ* made some stir in ecclesiastical circles. Lady Hoby published it only four years before she delivered herself of those voluminous directions for her own funeral. She was buried at Bisham on the 2nd of June 1609.

But she left her literary instincts behind her in the person of an eldest son. His name was Edward: he was born at Bisham in 1560. And as both his father and his mother were diplomatists in their different stages of life, he too became something of the same kind. He did not, like his father, and his father's half-brother, attain to the dignity of an accredited Ambassador; but it is not certain that he did not work for his country's welfare through equally diplomatic yet more secret means. In plain words, dates suggest that he was a member of the Secret Service, and had a grievance against the remarkable head and originator of that most memorable organization. In the year 1586, that eventful year when Walsingham's prearranged schemes for protecting England against fancied danger had culminated in the Babington Conspiracy, Sir Edward Hoby, who was then Member of Parliament for Queenborough in Kent, had occasion to make some uncomplimentary remarks about the master in the mud of whose dark and dubious service he had waded up to the neck. He wrote to Queen Elizabeth, who had knighted him four years before, informing her that her Secretary of State "had not only bitten him but had passed him by." His remonstrance must have been successful, for two years later found him one of the Commissioners appointed by the Queen to report on the preparations for the reception of the Armada. Let us hope that he had no hand in supplying that sour beer which poisoned half our fleet on that immortal occasion. But if there is anything in physiognomy, an oval-shaped portrait of him, with England's triumph over Spain in the background, does not inspire confidence, though it hangs now in a Kentish rectory. It suggests Walsingham and his devious delvings. It gives the idea of a dealer who has made something out of a naval contract, though Sir Edward is reported to have been present in person on one of those fast sailing and easily handled English ships which, with the assistance of fire-ships and a westerly gale, brought about Spain's downfall and that of Medina Sidonia.

Be this as it may, by the time James the First had come to the throne, Sir Edward Hoby had laid aside the sword, if he had ever drawn it, for a pen with which he did some quaint execution. From whatever source it came, the literary leaning clung to Sir Edward Hoby through life. It brought distinguished guests to Bisham, and Camden's name may be enrolled on that creditable visitors' list. It also inspired Sir Edward to those quaint literary efforts on his own account which have just been referred to, and which (to judge from their titles) were not altogether conceived in the spirit of a perfect Christian charity. A catalogue of these venomous outpourings of a diplomatic mind is here appended for the common benefit of Christendom: *A letter to Mr. T. H. late Minister, now Fugitive*

A Counter-snarle for Ishmael Rabshacheh, a Cecropian Lychaonite. (This effort in controversy brought about a reply, which was perhaps not unexpected. It bore the title of *Purgatories triumphs over Hell, mauger the barkings of Cerberius in Syre Edward Hobyes Countersnarle.*) This rejoinder might have given some of our modern disputants pause. It would appear, after a proper interval allowed for digestion, to have simply stimulated Sir Edward's controversial activity. Three years was the limit set to his silence. Then *A Curry-Combe for Coxecombs* decorated London's bookstalls. Whether this effort settled literary opponents is not certain; but it seems to have settled Sir Edward Hoby. He died at Queenborough Castle in the March of the year following, and was buried at Bisham.

This was the year of Shakespeare's death and of the trial of the Earl and the Countess of Somerset for their monstrous share in the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury. What has been finely described as "the Masqued and Muffled figures of Treachery and Murder" peep out upon us from the record of those dark days. It is a singular coincidence that the last owner of Bisham with whom this paper has had to do should have been a personal favourite of that James the First on whose shoulders rests grave suspicion of the Overbury atrocity; and that this Sir Edward Hoby's own mother's portrait still looks down from the Bisham dining-room walls, ghostly, spectral, pale even in portraiture, with the suspicion of murder.



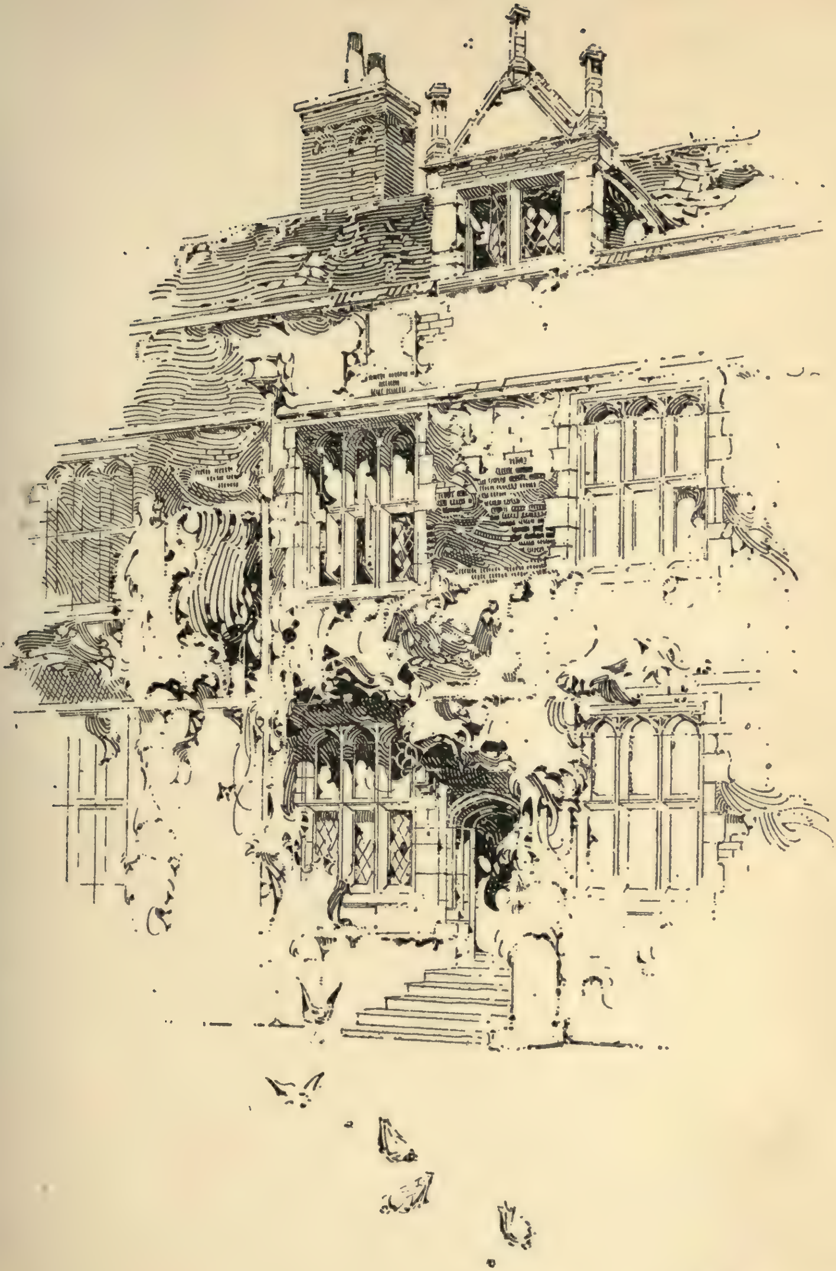
KENTWELL MANOR

V

KENTWELL HALL

THE spacious times of great Elizabeth are preserved in stone by this fine house, which is built in the perfect form of an E, and is approached by an avenue of limes nearly a mile long. Two bridges span the moat, and a more than ordinarily picturesque arrangement of gables and chimneys helps to make it stand out from other moated houses of the period as an almost perfect specimen.

The house, as it now stands, nearly untouched, was built by the last but one of the well-known family of Cloptons on the site of an earlier structure which had been in their possession since the fourteenth century. So here at Kentwell, as in so many places of the kind, the moat remains the indisputable record of the first foundation; still tries to murmur, in tones which cannot be fully heard, the earlier and now half-forgotten episodes of the house's story. The male line of the Cloptons became extinct in 1618. This was the date also of the more lamentable extinction of Sir Walter Raleigh, and, perhaps as a punishment for that piece of Jacobæan perfidy, the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. To return to the Cloptons, however. The extinction of their male line was not a disaster altogether irretrievable either to their family or to their moated house. An heiress remained to adorn the scene. And this heiress, of her own free will and inclination, enriched the history of Kentwell with a very whimsical character. Marriage was the method by which this desirable end was attained—and a marriage of a very precocious variety, too. At the mature age of fourteen, Anne gave her hand and heart, and Kentwell Hall with them, to Sir Simon D'Ewes. The delightful flavour of Sir Walter Scott's novel is caught again after study of the record of this seventeenth-century Antiquary. He was of Low Country descent—so that though he married an heiress only fourteen years old, slow blood may be supposed to have trickled through his veins. This did not prevent him from nearly losing his life by being drawn up in a bell that hung in the gateway of St. John's College, Cambridge. He was no doubt on some scientific inquiry intent, when this accident befell him. It would be uncharitable to suggest that this aerial expedition was the result of too much wine, since Simon apart from the ordinary University course was occupying himself with devout and dogmatically religious studies. The Law now leaned over our student's shoulder, with her quaint and so often delusive whispers, and he, in a half-hearted manner, answered her call, being entered at the Bar the year before the first newspaper was issued in England. Having a large private income, however, he soon saw no point, legal or otherwise, in waiting for briefs. Kentwell Hall, the mile of lime avenue, and an extremely young and rich wife waiting at the other end of it, to say nothing of a daily



Dormer from S. Court.

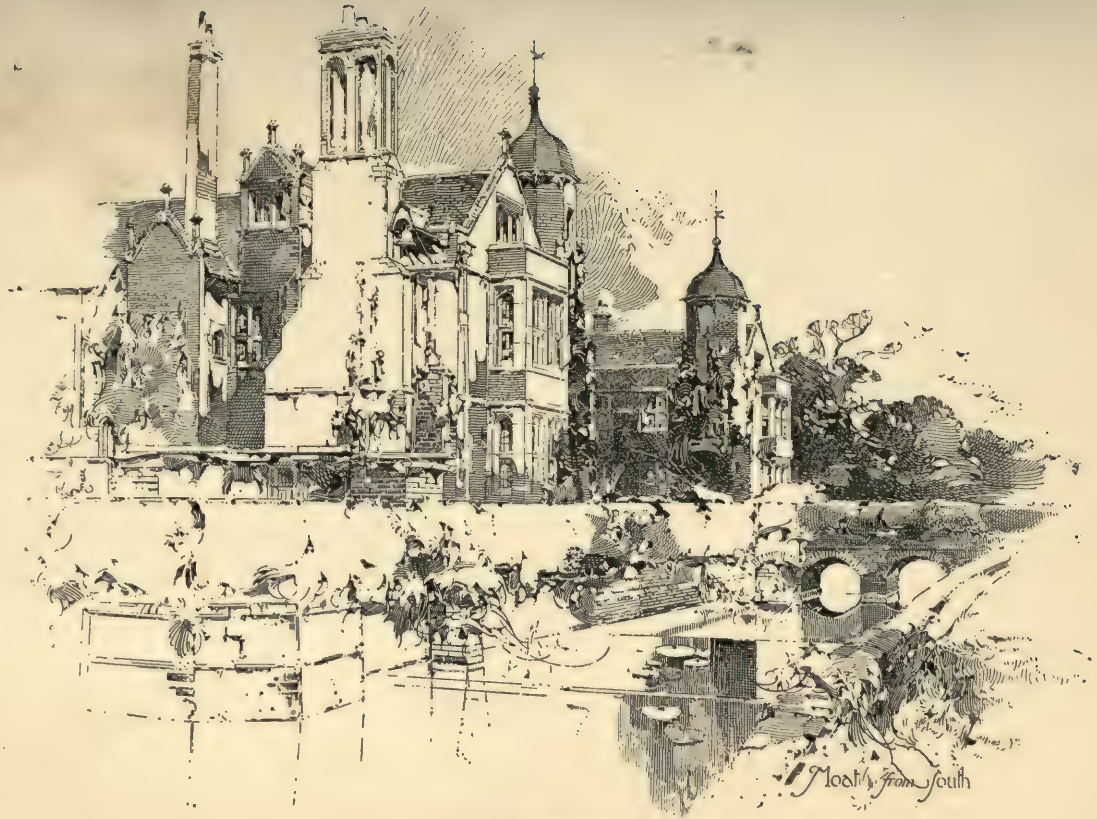
KENTWELL HALL

and indefatigable research into ancient records, solaced him for the lack of those legal honours which had yet been, as will be presently shown, the sole aim and the sole reward of a previous owner of the house. Sir Simon, safely entrenched in his Kentwell sanctum, now allowed his antiquarian tastes to turn into a complete hobby. This hobby he rode so furiously that he probably neglected that young wife whose fortune had given him the chance of indulging it. Anne died I suggest of ennui. But the Antiquary continued his untiring research, till he quite accidentally discovered that something was missing from the comfort of his home surroundings ; upon which discovery, he incontinently married again. His second wife was the daughter of Sir H. Willoughby of Derby, and it is not to be supposed that she did not bring something tangible to Kentwell with her, from the Derby Bank. Sir Simon looked after £ s. d. almost as closely as he looked after other Black Letters. But he was soon a widower again. Sir Simon himself died in the stirring times of Cromwell's campaign in Scotland. His second wife, whose name was Elizabeth, died in quieter surroundings. At Kentwell, at all events, stirring experiences had not been the poor lady's lot!

Neither the stress of public events nor the loss of two wives, perishing slowly of ennui before his eyes, moved Sir Simon in the least. He still retained his equanimity—and his horn spectacles, and the only thing that he showed the least solicitude about at all, was the fate of that scattered collection of antiquarian papers the compilation of which had killed two wives, engrossed his own life, and had been written entirely at random. He gravely desired, with the assistance of the local lawyer from Ipswich, that these fragments should be preserved entire, and should be made accessible to all lovers of learning who also had a liking for virtue and integrity. Then he took to politics.

In this new sphere of activity he figured as a Roundhead, though he was never known to have opened his lantern jaws in the House of Commons. He was probably thinking during the most strenuous moments ever known at Westminster, of that precious mass of antiquarian lore in safe storage at Kentwell. When he spoke at all in private to his fellow-members, his talk would not have been of Laud and Wentworth, or of Ship Money, or of the Grand Remonstrance, or kindred ephemeral matters, but of heraldic bearings, his avenue of limes at Kentwell, and of the probable form of that earlier house, whose walls the present moat washed, so far back as the fourteenth century. It is said, however, that he deplored the extreme measures taken against King Charles the First, and this very antiquarian attitude to prevailing views probably lost him his seat. It also very likely shortened his life. He was physically, and in the strictest sense of the word, thrown out of the House of Commons by Colonel Pride (in the application of that officer's well-known Purge), and the remedy proved too strong for him. He died at all events two short years after.

This departed Dryasdust's ruminations as to the appearance of the earlier Kentwell Hall, on whose ruins the present perfect specimen of an Elizabethan house was built (with laboured dissertations on which Sir Simon D'Ewes would have bored his fellow Members of Parliament at Westminster for hours over tea on the Terrace, if either tea or Terrace had at the moment been in existence—which they were not), may now occupy our attention, and possibly not without amusement. In search of this extremely desirable aid to life as it is now lived, we shall have to go so far back into the nation's history as 1359, when Edward the Third was at the height of his popularity, when Chaucer and Langland were writing, Wiclif was preaching Socialism, and England was only three years off the tremendous and victorious struggle at Poitiers. At that time Walter de Clopton was Commissioner of Array for the County of Suffolk. Without the assistance of Sir Simon D'Ewes, we may picture what sort of place was the Kentwell Hall in those days which Walter de Clopton and his heirs after him lived in. The moat still existing is its only memory. This probably washed the four walls of an Early English building in the form of a parallelogram consisting of a vaulted ground floor, a large room above it, and another room over the porch, used as an oratory. The vaulted ground floor, or the great hall, could be subdivided into any number of compartments if necessary by the simple expedient of screening them off with wooden partitions, or with what was the cheapest contemporary substitute for tapestry. But after the time apportioned for sleep, the room would have been cleared for a more profitable employment. It would, indeed, have been cleared for duties which were in those days part and parcel of an English country gentleman's life. For the hall of the Manor was in effect the local Court of Justice. The Lord of the Manor, at fixed times, lethargically appointed, sat at his hall table as Judge, or as Receiver-General at the Receipt of Customs. Though he was probably propped as upright as was possible, in consideration of overnight jollifications, in an arm-chair, he was really sitting upon the Bench. To him were presently introduced, or dragged, aspirants who desired to pay homage, unfortunates who owed fines, villagers who had to be enrolled in their tithings. Criminal jurisdiction was also meted out, and with sudden dispatch, in this temporary Law Court, devoted usually to prolonged and riotous revels. As Walter de Clopton was listening inattentively to what a prisoner had to say on his own behalf, he could see through the narrow window, or the open hall door, the gallows set up immediately opposite the main entrance, casting its sinister shadow on the moat. Wages were to be earned for keeping this useful implement of commerce in good repair. I read that in the eighth year of Edward the Fourth a certain William Braxteijn "held certain lands by the service of finding a ladder for his lord's gallows." These were rough and ready days in an England already engaged in our modern struggle between Capital and Labour which most of our politicians seem to think new, and with the ravages of the Black Death still a recent and terrible memory in the country. The tempers even of magistrates were not in the smoothest of conditions, and with the gallows beckoning alluringly outside the hall door,


Moat, from South

KENTWELL HALL

"Tie up! tie up!" was the condensed form that a judgment took in these improvized country Courts, especially when the weather was sultry. There was no appeal in that Hall of Justice in which Walter de Clopton and judges of his kidney sat; nor did the public hangman have to travel from one end of England to the other to give the final effect to his decrees. A local artist was always on the spot. People had just time to rattle off a leash of prayers; and their last view of Kentwell Hall had been taken. This formality over, the Hall of Justice would be turned into the dining-room again, and the judges, whether they were just or unjust, sit down to dinner. The Peace of Bretigny would very likely be the subject of talk over this meal; or the disastrous third campaign with France, with its loss of French territory; or the declining health of the King.

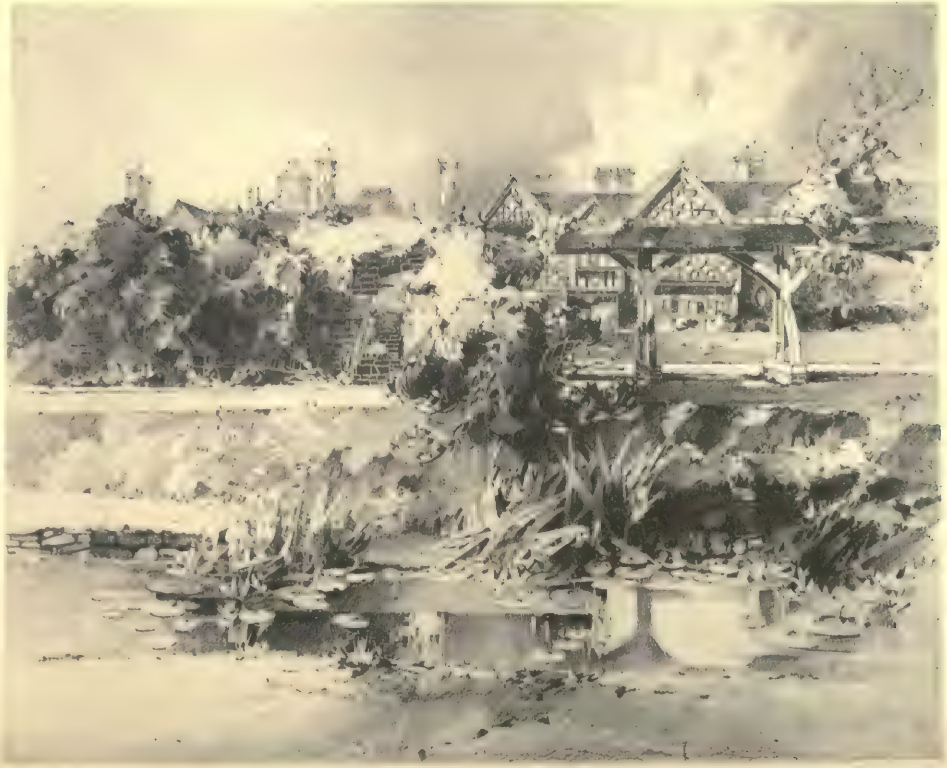
It must not be supposed, however, that the owner of Kentwell Hall, as it then stood, exercised his judicial abilities only, as above described, in his own dining-room. On the contrary, he was one of the rising lawyers of his day, and before Richard the Second had been a year on the throne, he took the degree of King's Serjeant. While John Bull was talking Socialism on commons as windy as himself, and Wat Tyler was preparing to put these precepts into hard blows, and peasants were revolting all over the country, and roaring out for mediæval Old Age Pensions, to say nothing of an Eight Hours Bill, the master of Kentwell rose steadily in his profession. The year 1383 saw him taking the Assizes at Hertford—an occasion on which the Monastery of St.

Albans appeared in the list of cases to be tried. This one was probably tried as cases are now. But there were no reporters in those days ready to spread a sensation, and the voice of the *Star* man was not heard in the land. This St. Albans scandal surmounted without the public knowing anything about the facts of the case, our Judge's road to preferment was easy; and at the very time when the Lords Appellant were attacking Richard the Second's friends in what was called the Merciless Parliament (surely a prototype of our own august body now at Westminster assembled), Walter de Clopton was made Lord-Chief-Justice of England. In this exalted position, his career, I regret to say, discovers a certain suggestion of dubiety. To put it in plain words, it seems to suggest that in the long succession of intrigues which paved the way to Richard's deposition and Bolingbroke's final triumph, the Lord-Chief-Justice of England was not only sitting on the Bench, but was also sitting on the fence. He apparently slipped off on the right side of this novel seat of Justice just in time. He had at all events succeeded in not forfeiting the favour of the new King, Henry the Fourth. For in the first Parliament summoned by that usurping King we find him appointed to inquire into the conduct of one of his brother-judges who had been less fortunate and less adroit. To illustrate the shifty and underground currents of the times, the Lord-Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas was suspected of carrying letters between the late King and the Duke of Gloucester, then in prison at Calais. Legal acumen somewhat tardily coming to his rescue, the Lord-

Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas acknowledged to carrying the said letter, but loudly proclaimed that he was totally ignorant of what was inside it. It is possible that Walter de Clopton might have reminded him if the moment had been favourable—but it wasn't, so there the matter dropped. This suggestion may seem unfair to the dignity of the first Judge in the land and the owner of Kentwell. But that, at an earlier period in his career, he was not averse to fishing for what could be picked up in waters however muddy is proved by the fact, that before he attained to the dignity of King's Serjeant, he, and his sons Walter and Edmund, were forbidden to leave the country on pain of forfeiture of their possessions. Imagine the ruminations at Kentwell during this forced stay in that fine country seat.

Having survived this trouble, however, and plenty of judicial ones as well; having seen the fall of one King and probably helped at it, and the accession of another to whom he also lent his aid, Walter de Clopton fell himself into another mood—this time a religious one. He first of all, however, shook off his judicial robes, and retired from office, remembering Lot's wife, and taking care not to look behind him; and repaired to the Monastery of the Grey Friars in Norwich. This act, however pious it may at first sight seem, suggests the latent possibility of his having had to seek sanctuary. The date of his death is uncertain, though some experts place it as late as only two years before the death of Henry the Fourth.

This brief sketch of two of the inmates of Kentwell Hall dower the place with a self-conscious Antiquary and an unjust Judge, and we only hope that no injustice has been done to the memory of either. One lived in the Early English Kentwell; the other in the present perfect specimen of Elizabethan architecture; and they may well have joined destinies when, after having surmounted so many worldly difficulties, they had to surmount a further and a final one, and cross, not the Kentwell Moat, but the Stygian River. Perhaps in that dingy region they have struck up an acquaintanceship on the grounds of a successive ownership of Kentwell! Perhaps, under the pale glimpses of the moon, fraternize, arm in arm, under that fine avenue of limes which remains one of the greatest glories of their joint Suffolk home!



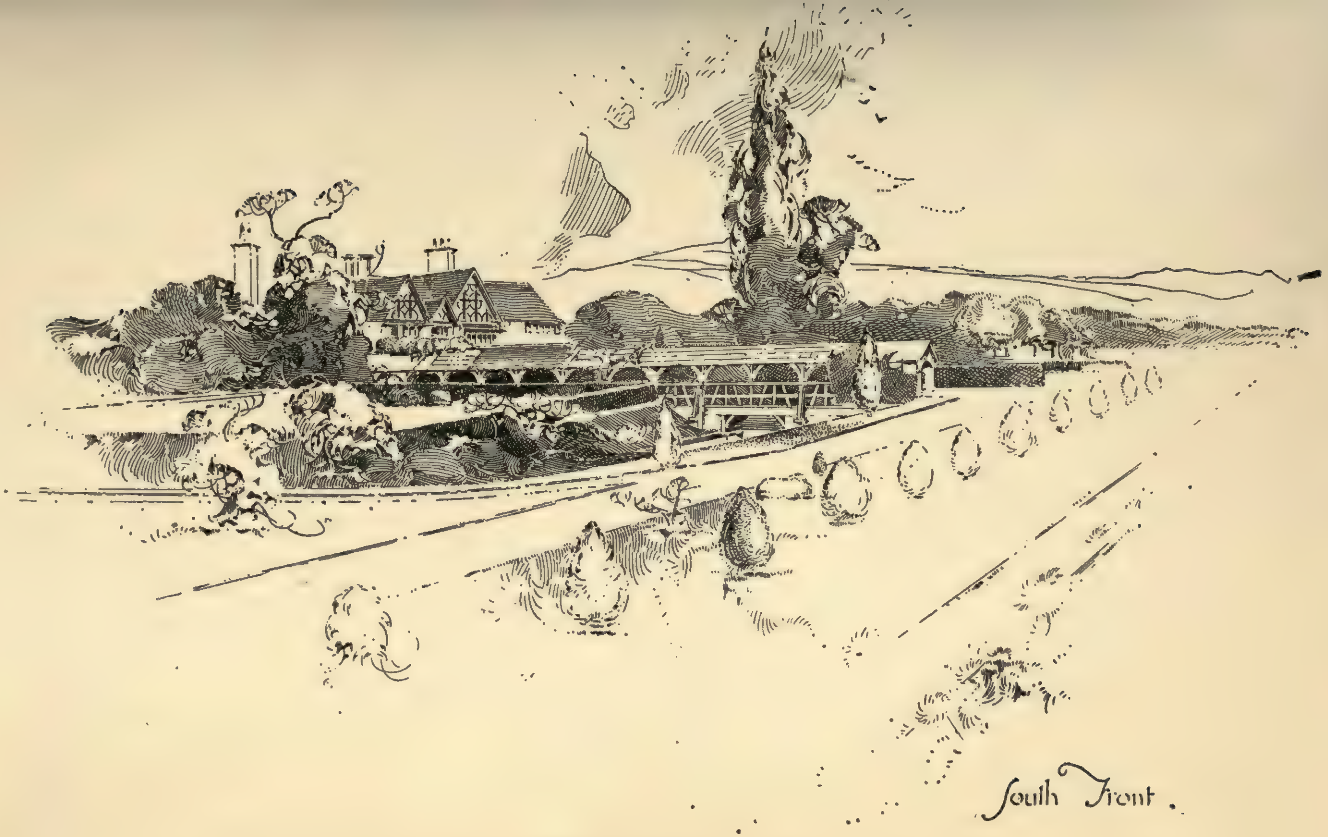
GREAT TANGLEY MANOR

VI

GREAT TANGLEY

THE sinister eyes of the greatest of the Angevins, it is said, once looked into the broad moat which surrounds this beautiful Surrey house, and which in summer is filled with water lilies. For the one rumour more fixed than any other about Tangley, is that an earlier building whose walls the present moat washed was used by King John as one of his hunting lodges. The Chiddingfold hounds now look for foxes in the dense woodlands, which in John's time were still denser, and in which the ablest of the Plantagenets looked for nobler sort of game. In those days a huge forest stretched from Tangley nearly to the foot of the South Downs. Small villages stood here and there in the clearances, each adorned with a Norman church, and with what was more important it is to be feared in the then Kings of England's eyes, a *Maison du Roi* as it was called, under whose roof royal limbs might repose themselves after the joys and perils of the chase. It is possible that Great Tangley was in its original form one of these royal hunting boxes. But the history of the house is wrapped in an unpleasing uncertainty. "King John once lived here" is all that can be got from local augurs. That fact is firmly fixed in the brain of the countryside. And there the matter rests.

Whether King John was ever at Great Tangley or no, his baleful glance could never have rested on the present house, which must have been built several centuries after the wicked Plantagenet had retired from this world's labours, in the words of a dreadful contemporary comment, "to defile Hell with his presence." Nothing indeed in Tangley, or its quiet and beautiful setting, suggests that crowned monster who began his career by plucking out the beards of the Irish chieftains who came to own him as their lord, and whose ingratitude and perfidy put the last nail into his father's coffin. The picturesque gables, the trim lawns, the well-ordered gardens, the broad and brimming moat of Great Tangley Manor breathe not the faintest memory of the man who spent his spare time in designing punishments (the *Peine fort et dure*, or crushing people to death by the weight of a stone, was one of his sprightly inventions); who had such a superstitious dread of the number Nine that when he had killed eight boars or stags nothing would induce him to go on hunting; and who perished in a struggle of despair against English freedom, with the assistance of a poisoned apple administered by a raving monk. Nothing about Great Tangley suggests a note of these historic horrors. The mere mention of mediævalism seems out of place under the shadow of


South Front.

GREAT TANGLEY MANOR HOUSE

this beautiful Surrey home. No tyrant surely can ever have sheltered here. The moat's restful murmur would have interrupted the calm flow of his murderous thoughts ; the water lilies swaying on the moat's surface would have been no inspiration to deeds for whose modern parallel the *Newgate Calendar* must be consulted. What have these smooth lawns and ordered gardens laughing with a profusion of summer bloom to do with a man who starved children to death, and tore Jews' teeth out of their heads till they gave him what money he wanted? Nothing, surely. There is a legend which, legend though it is, should not perhaps be overlooked, that it was at Tangley that King John planned that campaign in France which had for its object the relief of Château Gaillard. I suggest that if he was ever at Tangley at all, he was there after one of his subjects' wives. Let his sinister presence be banished from this serene spot!

Let us seek some association more in harmony with the place.

One is forthcoming, and with much better evidence in support of it than ever King John in his most judicial moods suppressed, in the person of a gentleman, a scholar, and a man of letters. I have been told that John Evelyn was once the owner of Great Tangley, and though I have found no evidence to support the statement I am glad to believe it. This moated house would have been an ideal home for the pensive, religious, refined chronicler of the roaring days of Charles the Second, though he had a beautiful and much larger home at Wotton, not moated, and not many miles away. From Wotton most of John Evelyn's letters were written, and also the greater part of his *Diary*. This splendid country seat is in the hands of his descendants still, who have lived there in an unbroken succession for many hundreds of years. I suspect that John Evelyn, often as he was at Great Tangley, was there as an honoured and much-sought-after guest. A stroll at sunset by the side of the moat would have calmed those feelings of indignation at the unblushing licence of the times which make themselves more poignantly felt after each reperusal of his *Diary*. The bacchanalian roars of Charles the Second's shameless courtiers jarred on that fine spirit. The atmosphere of Whitehall was no air for him to breathe; and the melancholy feeling that his country was rushing through licence to ruin, no doubt often found poignant and apt expression under the hospitable gables of Great Tangley. One of his visits to this Surrey moated house must at all events have brought about some stirring talk, when the ladies had left the dining-table, and the splendid mahogany had bared its shining face, and the wine had been set before the country gentlemen present, who were eager for the latest news from London and knew themselves to be in the company of one who could retail it.

I have traced John Evelyn to Great Tangley Manor at a date immediately succeeding the death of Charles the Second. That unexpected event had given the whole country pause. No catastrophe had been less expected; for the King, who had never in our modern acceptation of the term ceased living as hard as he could ever since he had come to the throne, had lately if possible been living harder, and looked, to people who had seen him feeding his ducks and sauntering in St. James's with a small pack of his pet spaniels at his heels, as if he would live for ever. But the Pale Horseman had called at Whitehall very suddenly. The nation, who with all his faults loved its witty, able, dissolute, fearless King, and England, who had metaphorically speaking been "holding both her sides" for twenty-five years, ceased laughing when Death touched Charles on the shoulder. Nothing indeed, from a worldly point of view, could have been more untimely for "Old Rowley" than that unexpected summons. By a series of diplomatic manœuvres, which have never had sufficient credit given to them, he had succeeded in hoodwinking his Ministers and his people without losing the affection of either of them : a pension from the King of France was recondite in his pocket : he had a standing army of 9000 men at his command in England, as well as six regiments abroad : his clergy were running about all over England preaching Passive Obedience as a duty : Charles in fact was an absolute King. And then that Greater King had stepped in so unexpectedly, and made the long succession of artful scheming worthless in a few hours. Apoplexy put a sudden stop to the triumph of this royal politician.

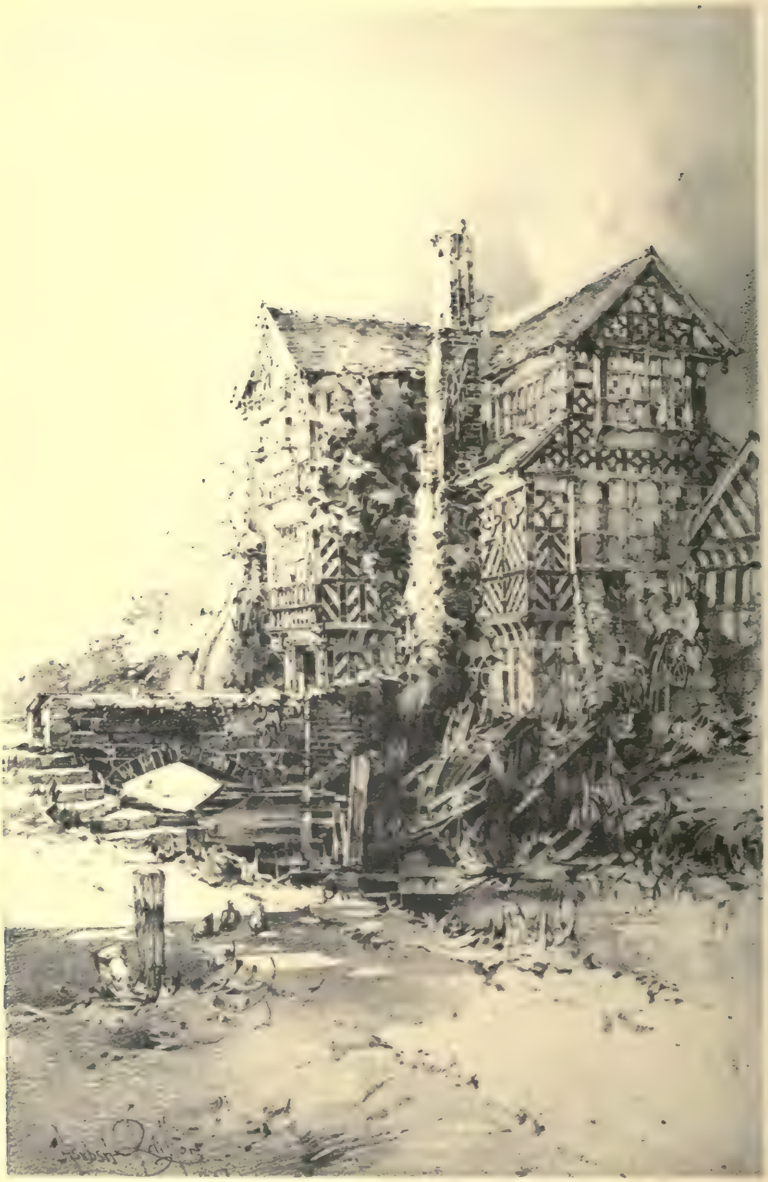
It was on this event, so startling, so dramatic in its suddenness and in its far-reaching results, that John Evelyn would have discoursed in the dining-room at Great Tangley over the walnuts and the wine. The scholar, the antiquarian and diarist, had been about the precincts of Whitehall when this august disaster happened. Death, as he so swiftly entered that lordly pleasure-house, must have brushed the meditative diarist with those invisible robes which hid a dread presence so little suspected. There was little thought of the end of all things in the long gallery of the Palace on the Sunday evening before the King's seizure. Evelyn had been there in person, had watched with grave face the unbridled junketings of that courtly assembly, who had no idea of Sunday observance, and as little thought for the morrow. He would have described that splendid, reckless, and voluptuous scene to eager listeners at the Tangley mahogany. The sound of lutes and viols accompanying the clash of gold on the ombre tables! Wine poured out like water from priceless flagons by black pages dressed in Eastern splendour! Roars of laughter succeed each toast from which every element of decency is conspicuously absent. Gorgeously dressed beauties vie with gallants equally splendid in bandying this dubious talk. A vision of scent and satin and diamonds and flushed faces of beautiful women bending over the wine-bowl or the card-table, desperately intent on either duty, with handsome courtiers leaning familiarly over them and whispering the best moment to cheat or the time and place for the next assignation. Spaniels of King Charles breed running all over the Palace floor and turning its polished service into a play-ground. Finally, in the centre of this scene of splendour and riot, Charles himself lolling back in his chair. On the table before him a great heap of gold. Three favourite sultanas of the Court, Barbara Palmer Duchess of Cleveland, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and Hortensia Mancini Duchess of Mazarin, divide their ardent glances between this heaped-up gold and their royal master, while a handsome French page who had already made a small fortune by his vocal performances warbles an amorous ditty. The light falling through the splendid stained-glass window above shows up "Old Rowley" well—his sallow, hard-lined face framed in a tremendous black curled wig. Even then he does not feel quite well. By and by he will complain that he has no appetite for supper. Meanwhile riot and pleasure roam unrestrained through Whitehall on this Sunday afternoon. The next morning the stroke fell.

Evelyn would have presented some such picture as this to his honest Surrey neighbours, who listened to it with mouths so agape that they were unable to swallow their wine. The fatal morrow's events would then have been set forth as a foil to all this irreligious splendour, and the grave master of Wotton would not have let the opportunity pass of fixing a moral to this next sketch of Court life. Slowly sipping a choice vintage and letting his calm eye rest on the February sunset streaming through Great Tangley's dining-room windows, and turning the moat to its own rich colour, he would speak with an added solemnity of those dire and retributive events which befell.

Sabbath-breakers, if any sat round the dinner-table, trembled in their shoes and felt a good dinner disagreeing with them, as Evelyn in measured tones, not altogether unbefitting a pulpit, detailed the tragic events which followed on this shameless desecration of the Lord's Day. Charles rising from his bed black in the face and speechless: his determined but fruitless attempt to dress himself: the hurried arrival of the Court physicians, not feeling themselves as they could wish to, and all divided as to the symptoms of the royal invalid: the prescriptions, the potions, the antidotes (for poison, as was always in those days associated with a case of this kind): finally the abominable charm, culled it would seem from the lowest depths of the witches' cauldron, stuffed into the mouth of the royal patient, who retained his urbanity throughout all these aimless inflictions, and who as soon as he could speak expressed his regret that he was such an unconscionable time dying. Evelyn would have had all these details at first hand. He would have told, too, of the guilty favourite hanging over the bed of her insensible lover: of her being driven from the room by those who had a legitimate right to be present: of her lonely agonies of grief in those splendid apartments purchased by her own shame. Waiting about Whitehall as he no doubt was, he might have caught sight of the disguised priest being ushered up those private stairs, which had been devoted but the day before to a very different purpose, and had echoed to a widely different tread. The speaker had a good subject to discourse upon. We may be sure that he drove its moral home.

The February of 1685 was a vision of spring in winter. The balminess of the evening would have invited Evelyn's congregation into the garden of the house to watch the last rays of the sunset, and to recover themselves respectively from the wine which had heated their brains and from a discourse which had chilled them to the marrow. Tobacco fumes would soon be seen rising in the still air. Whispered opinions were hazarded that death came when one least looked for it, and that apoplexy was a plaguy awkward thing. Was it apoplexy? Was it poison? The whole thing was very uncomfortable. Then silence fell unbroken save by perturbed pipe-puffings. No one looked and admired the serene beauty of the old house, its fine black-and-white work growing indistinct under the oncoming twilight: its towering gables alone standing out clear in the pale February sky. The scared company in the garden smoked their pipes in silence, and wondered what the new King would do.

Evelyn objected strongly to tobacco, and he was also afflicted with a nervous dislike to the society of ladies. He probably therefore neither joined the company in the garden nor the ladies in the drawing-room; but finding his own thoughts the better company of the two, enjoyed them for a quiet half-hour at the dining-room's open window, meditating the great and grave events he had lately discussed, and secretly enjoying the discomfiture which had been occasioned by the recital. One can picture his pale, refined, and scholarly face framed by the window and shown up by the last rays of the twilight. His calm gaze falls upon Great Tangley's moat. It is more in keeping with the spirit of the place than the fabled and baleful glance of the wickedest of the Plantagenets.



MORETON HALL

VII

MORETON HALL

1540

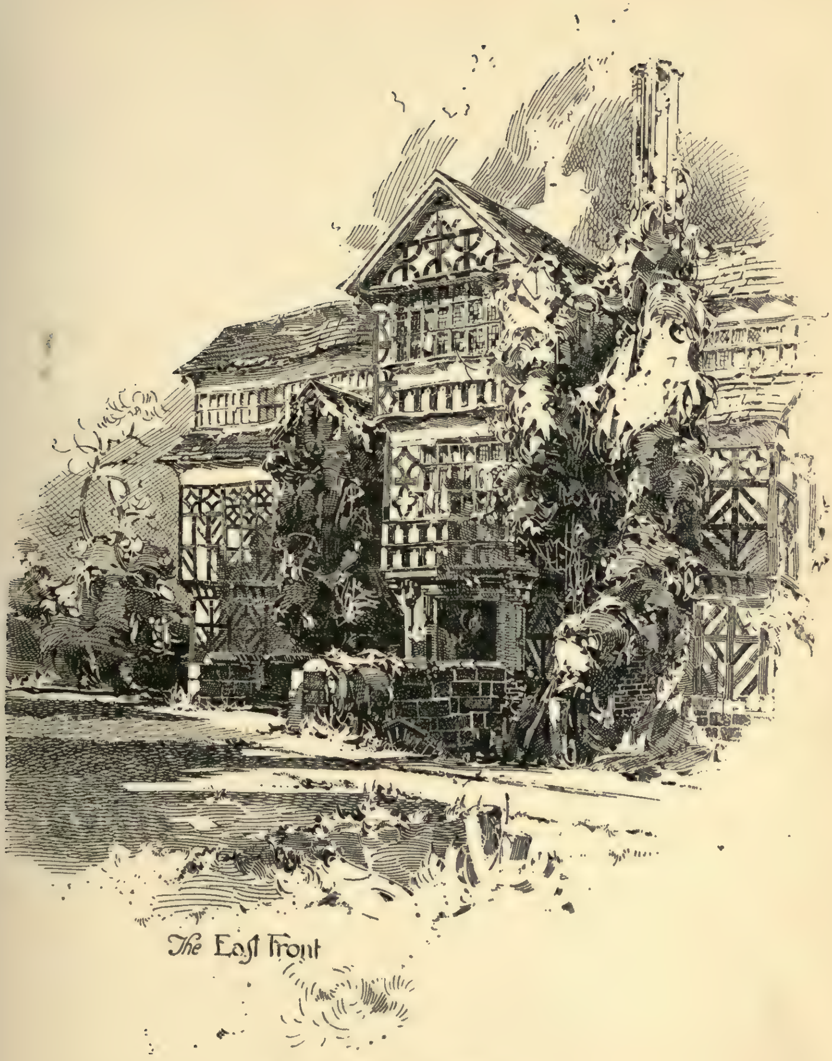
THIS is the house of inscriptions. It is at the same time the finest specimen of black-and-white work in the country. In spite of this last advertisement for a fame which is not needed, the first-mentioned characteristic of the place calls for special comment, particularly in view of the fact that the house is frequently shown to visitors for an entire summer without any of the said inscriptions being for a moment noticed. And yet, in a handwriting carved in English oak, they will remain, as long as the house stands (which is likely to be a longer period than will fall to the lot of some more modern buildings), a picturesque and enduring monument of naive people who wrote comments about themselves on their own walls, when Parsons and Campian were engaged in what has been called by a modern historian "The Jesuit Invasion."

The inscriptions about Moreton, representing as they do the striking individuality of the house, or to speak more correctly, of the race of Moretons, who, not content with building it, wrote their own views of life on every part of the place which lent itself to this form of handing down family history, call for detailed notice. Words not being thought a sufficient medium, symbols were also called to the aid of this new way of making seventeenth-century people's views known to distant posterity. Let some of these be noticed first. Over the west window a figure of Fortune is to be seen recumbent under a wheel, the whole design accompanied by this illustrative motto—

"Qui modo scandit corruet statim"—

a Latin observation which must much amaze the present occupiers of the place, or would if they could translate it, and were not engaged in the much more useful duties of looking after cattle. At the east end another symbol meets the eye. It takes the form of a figure holding a globe, in a posture which might well be taken to represent England under her present difficulties, "with an army without soldiers, pensions without the money to pay for them, an education policy full of bigotry but without a trace of education, the confiscation of licences without a pretence of temperance, a disordered Ireland without government or executive, and an Empire without cohesion." Or it might be taken to represent the poet's fine vision of his country struggling under adversity :—

"She the weary Titan
With ears deaf and labour-dimm'd eyes
Staggering on to her goal,
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the weight
Well nigh not to be borne
Of the too vast orb of her fate."


The East Front

MORETON HALL

The Moretons, however, who put this symbol up, had, it would seem, different views from those held by the author of *Empedocles on Etna*, or by a late Solicitor-General. They have entitled their design

"The sphere of Destiny whose rule is Knowledge."

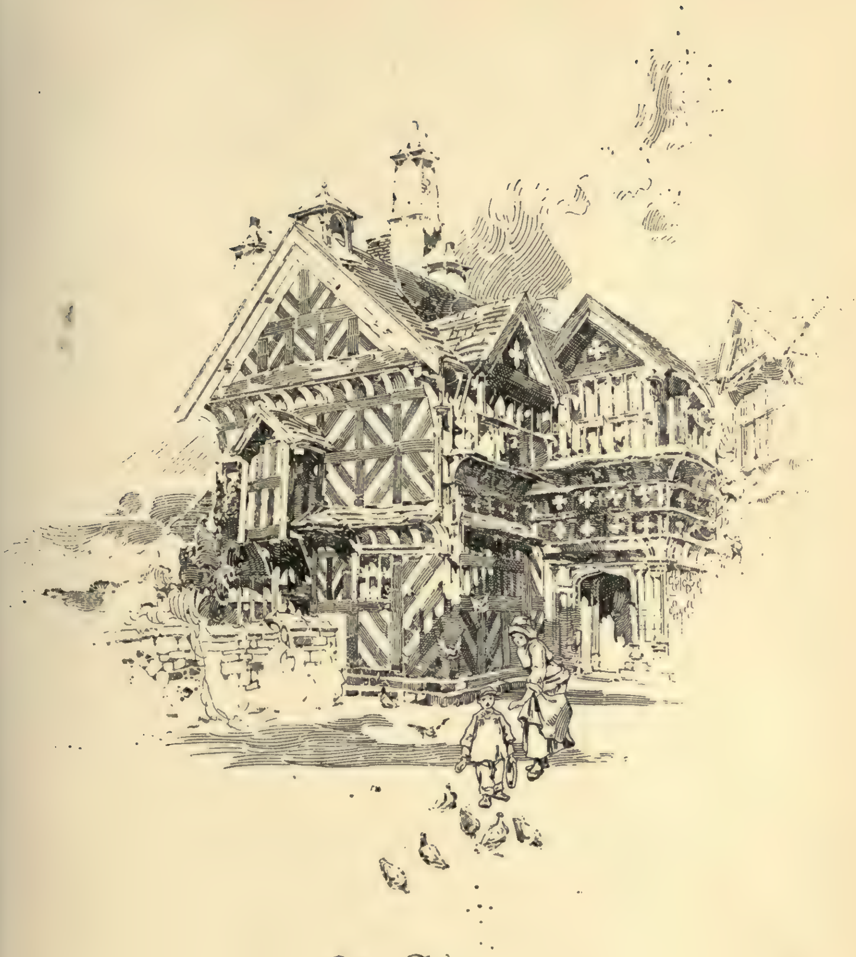
This seems very occult. But dark as the enigma is, it can be studied in an open courtyard, whose sides are formed of bay windows. It now seems time to go to dinner as far as Moreton's old Hall is concerned, and the first thing which strikes one on entering the dining-hall is an heraldic representation of the arms of Queen Elizabeth fixed over the mantelpiece. The Virgin Queen is supposed, therefore, by some antiquaries to have visited Moreton in one of her innumerable progresses. Other savants of the same kind deny that she was ever near the place, and point to the absence of any documentary evidence as a proof of the correctness of their view. An experience, however, gathered from a long study of old houses suggests that this very reason advanced is fatal to the theory. A royal coat of arms in these places is either a memorial of a visit from Royalty, or it is a memorial of some service done by the owners to the Crown. And as there is no record of the Moretons having ever done anything but look after their fine old house and their broad and level acres, it is probable that Gloriana, who being a true child of the Renaissance had an eye for the picturesque, did take occasion to pay Moreton Hall a fleeting visit, incognito. The history of the house still to be read only in this quaint Chronicle of the Walls now passes into the hands of an artist of the deepest dye, who with humility inseparable from true genius and with a weakness in spelling equally native to that state, has the temerity to describe himself as "a Carpeder," with his own hand. He built one of the lower windows according to his own showing, and probably the upper ones as well, though a Moreton, by another inscription, seems at first sight to lay claim to one of these. He remarks, in a mural forecast of one of those scrolls issued by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and in the quaint spelling of the day, the indisputable truth that

"God is All in All Things,"

and then proceeds to execute a second piece of handwriting on the wall more open to contention, to say nothing of grammar. Its self-advertizing purport is as follows:—

> "This window whire made by William Moreton in the Yeare of our Lorde. MDLIX."

But what was William Moreton that he should make a window, and a fine one too? He was no "Carpeder." He meant probably in a moment of ungrammatical ecstasy to say, not that he built the window, or the windows aforesaid, but that he paid the "Carpeder" afore-mentioned for building them. This "Carpeder" as a matter of fact is presently found coming to the rescue of his own reputation with pen



The Porch.

MORETON HALL

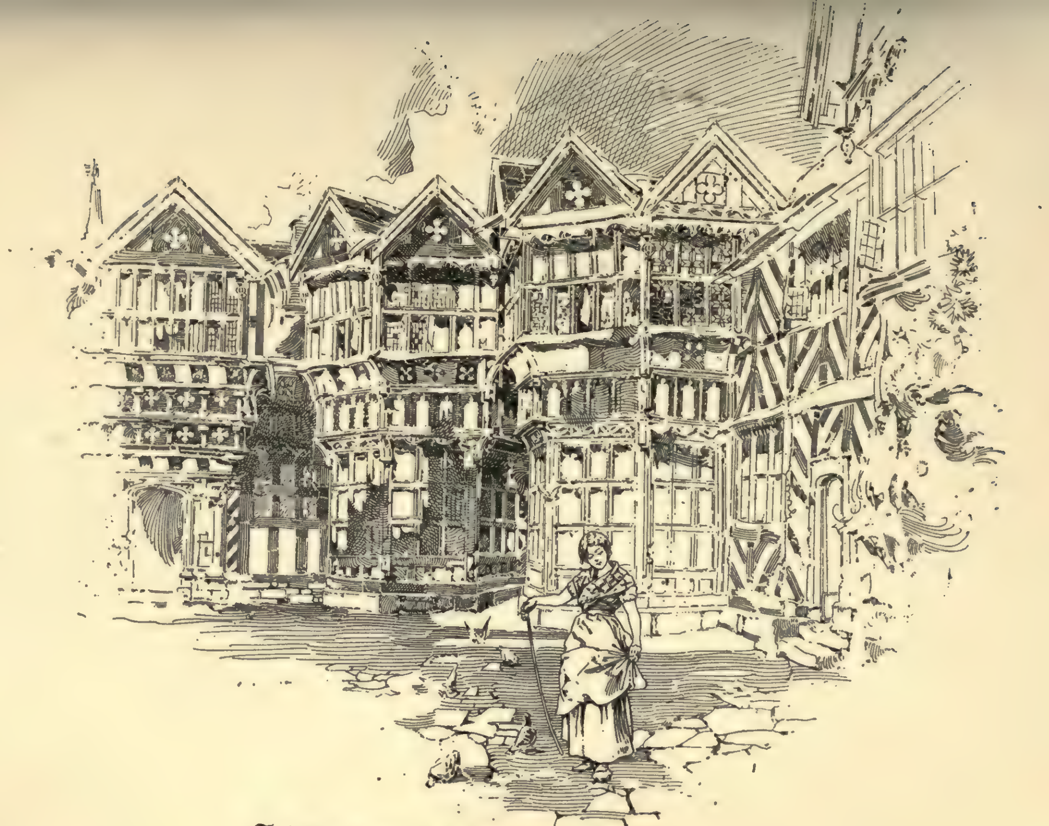
—I mean chisel—in hand. And the following pronouncement clears the difficulty:—

> "Richard Dale, Carpeder made this
> windowe by the Grace of God."

Enough has been said to show that Moreton has good claim to be called the house of inscriptions. But it must not be thought that this picturesque peculiarity is confined to the writings on its walls. On the contrary, a very cursory examination of the fine stained-glass windows of the dining-room shows that they too have their tale to tell. They bear indeed curious and evident traces of several people having written all over them with diamond rings. This smacks somewhat of a vulgar modernity. Are we looking at the windows of a first-class railway carriage which has borne bejewelled bookmakers to a suburban race meeting, or venal beauties to a dinner at the Star and Garter, where their brazen eyes have stared at everything except the incomparable view? The venerable surroundings of Moreton Hall negative this rude impeachment. One of these exercises of writing with a diamond on glass especially forbids so modern a suspicion. This particular feat of scholarship eloquently calls for notice. In the first place, it is in a woman's handwriting, and a very clear and beautiful one too; in the second place, it shows a perfectly accurate grasp of a knowledge in which many contemporaries were deficient—that is to say, the art of correctly writing their own names. Nothing indeed strikes a reader of old documents so much as this curious contemporary defect. All classes in the England of Elizabeth and James the First were victims to it. Shakespeare did not know, when he took his pen in hand, whether his name was properly written Shakespeare, Shakespear, or Shakespere. Undecided as to the proper spelling, he tried all three ways in turn, as time allowed or as Canary wine suggested. The Lord-Chief-Justice of England, than whom no man more quickly made up his mind about a judgment, vacillated too when the spelling of his own name became the question before the Court. Cook, Coke, Cooke, are all to be found at the bottom of his letters, written in characters more or less trembling and disguised. Even a Gunpowder Conspirator did not seem to know whether his name was Robert Winter or Robert Wintour. And his doubt on this purely personal matter has joined controversialists in deadly strife. Spelling in those days must have been purely a matter of fancy or of the state of the writer's health. No such doubt, however, assailed the fair authoress of the diamond-cut signature on the stained-glass window of Moreton Hall. Who travels by the London & North-Western Railway and can read—if Moreton Hall is his goal, and he is fortunate enough to reach it safely—will be able to decipher this signature clearly enough. And when he has deciphered it, if he is an imaginative man, it will give him food for thought.

"Margaret Moreton . Aug. 3 . 1649."

Personally speaking, I do not know that any inscription on brass, stone, glass, or paper, of men or women famous or the reverse, has stirred my fancy more than

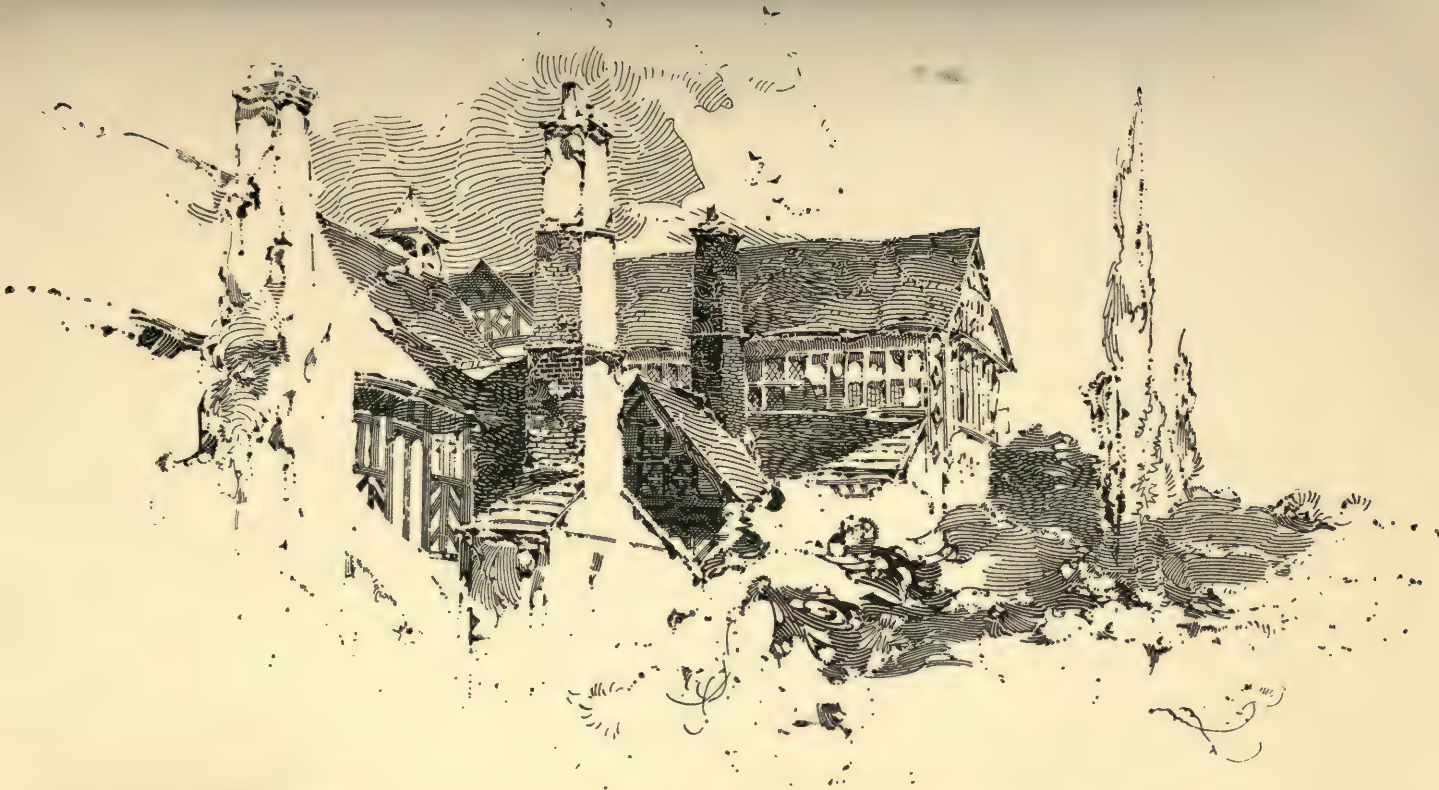


The Courtyard & Oriels.

MORETON HALL

this name and date, guiltless of all comment, offering no trace of any possible clue, and written by a woman's hand two hundred and sixty-one years ago. As our French Allies would phrase it, "it gives one furiously to think." What impulse prompted a wife or daughter of this house to write her name on her husband's or father's stained-glass window six months after Charles the First's execution, and a month before Cromwell put the garrison of Drogheda to the sword? Was this inscriptive feat prompted by some mournful Royalist recollection? Was Margaret, on the contrary, a sympathizer with the thick-set man in the buff coat and orange scarf whose red nose was already scenting that Irish carnage which was to masquerade as conversion? Was the fair scribe Puritan or Cavalier? Was she neither? What particularly prompted her at this moment to this inscriptive effort destined to so puzzle posterity? Was she in love? Was she in a tantrum? If she was in love, she may have written her name in the ecstasy of a long-hidden hope lately gratified, while the hoofs of her departing and accepted suitor's horse still echoed in the courtyard. If she was in a tantrum, it may have been because a bashful lover had once more been too bashful to make the long-deferred proposal, and writing her name on a window was the only thing which kept her from throwing about the plates. Who can tell what impulse prompted Margaret Moreton to write her name so clearly on Moreton Hall's stained-glass windows? Tragic impulses may have impelled this piece of calligraphy. A forsaken and broken-hearted wife may have eased a moment's loneliness by the exercise. A love-lorn maiden may have been tempted to drown melancholy for a while by taking her diamond ring in hand. It may have been a lazy girl's exercise on a summer's afternoon after a hearty lunch!

Time keeps this secret of Moreton and Margaret safe. And records are equally reticent as to the meaning of a circular mound inside the moat, and of another and larger circular mound outside it. Both possibly once supported towers, and they suggest the existence of an earlier foundation; or of some earthworks thrown up in the days of the Civil War, for which no use was found. Moreton Hall, so far as records tell us, escaped the many stray sieges which took place all over England in those troubled times, and as it now stands for the admiration of all who are able to appreciate domestic architecture, it can lay no claim to being a defensible house. Had it stood a siege, and been taken, the garrison would have been put to the sword. It is indeed a habitable house solely, with its sleeping-rooms over the fine old gateway; its curious gallery, 68 feet by 12, probably used for dancing before that originally stately form of exercise degenerated into the waltz (which Byron in an indifferent satire so much deplored); with its chapel on the east side of the courtyard, its painted windows and black-lettered texts. From the windows is seen across the broad moat a far-reaching view of green and level pasture-land dotted with elms and sycamores on which cattle graze for the benefit of the present tenants of the place, which might possibly be in more appreciative



The Roofs of Moreton

hands. A recollection of superb black-and-white work, quaint inscriptions carved scrupulously on the tell-tale walls; of bay windows; roofs of the solid oak; of square compartments filled with quatrefoils; lingers long in the memory after Moreton Old Hall has been visited, and left to brood in silence over its lonely and neglected fate. And then once more the name of Margaret appeals to the imagination, and this time in connection with a quaint and a last inscription in this house which seems dedicated to them, and which used once to adorn a pane in the east window of the chapel—

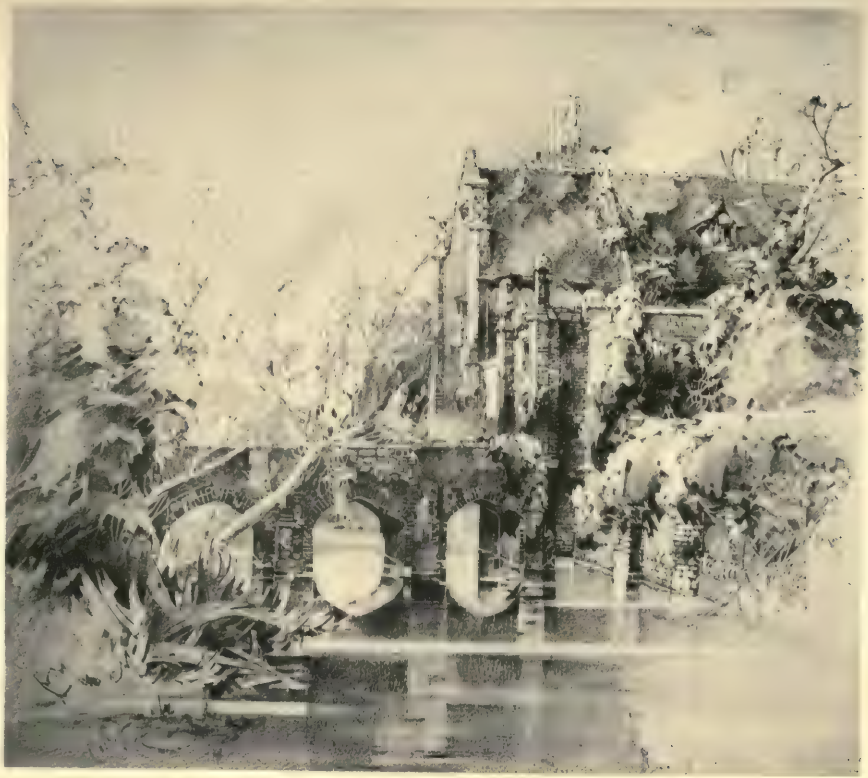
"Men can noe more knowe weomans mynde by teares
Than by her shaddow judge what clothes she wears."

Was Margaret the author of this profound saying, happy in the possession of a new gown got by a pretended fit of crying? Who can tell? Moreton Old Hall has at least no more to say on the matter.

VIII

CROW'S HALL

CROW'S HALL probably dates from 1508. This was the year before the death of Henry the Seventh, who, avaricious even when on the point of leaving a world from which he could take nothing away with him, expired in the Palace which he had built for himself at Richmond, clutching at imaginary gold bags. Our miser King gave in his last debit and credit account, and Crow's Hall entered upon the long period of its quiet domestic life, when a previous period of moral and political stagnation was beginning to be aroused by the movement of great events. England awoke after the twenty-four years' sleep that had followed the long strain of Civil War. What is called the New Learning—carrying under a pedantic name what immense forces for good or evil!—had just been introduced. Erasmus was watching and weighing well the effect of that potent and magic draught which the nation was drinking in so greedily. No signs of the times present or to come escaped those clear eyes as they scanned the mental horizon from the tower of the beautiful Cambridge College. At the sister University, Collet, inspired unknown to himself by the magic influence

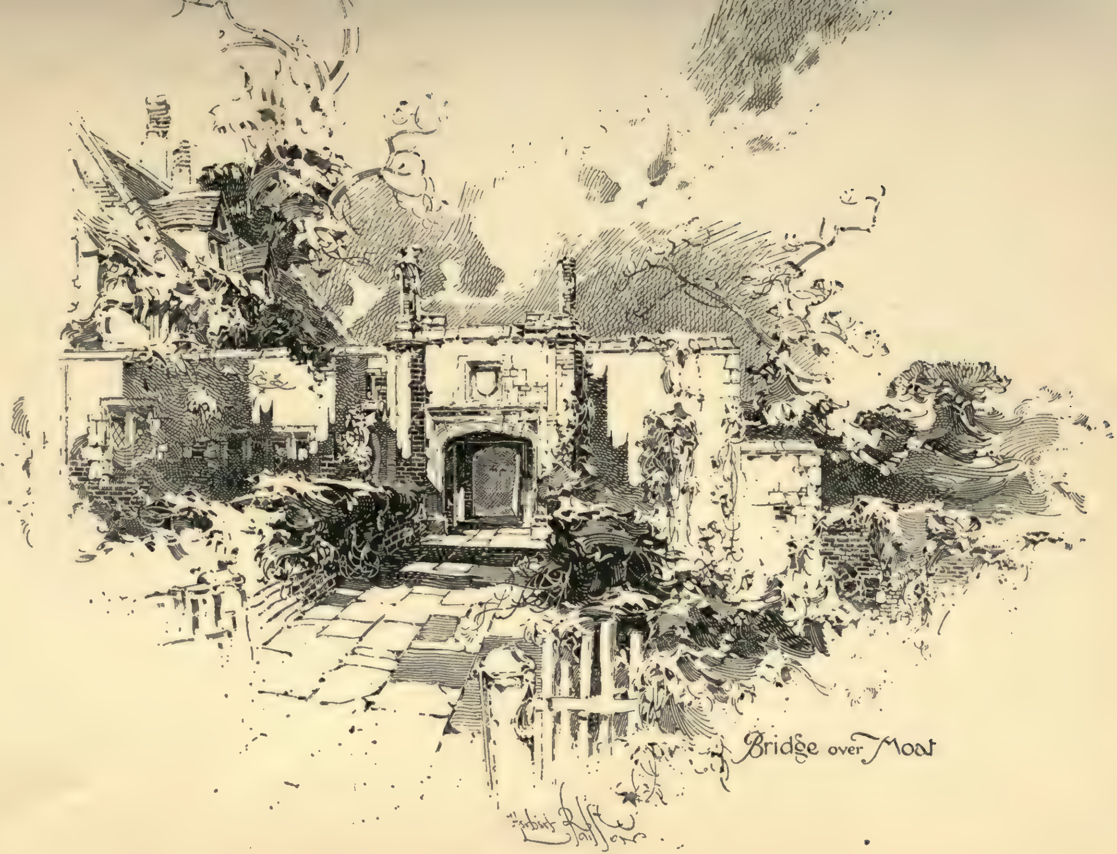


CROW'S HALL

in the air, delivered a series of lectures, curiously full of thought. Sir Thomas More, already meditating his *Utopia*, had just finished his Life of Edward the Fifth. Luther had begun to lecture in Germany, and to read into the doctrines of the Catholic Church meanings very different from those current at the Vatican. Knowledge was in the air.

It might possibly, however, have taxed the combined insight of all the above-mentioned experts to discover the site of the house which gives its name to this paper, unless they had known it from childhood and concealed the knowledge, or stumbled upon it accidentally when they had lost their way. Moated houses have a tendency to nestle. It is easy to pass them by, even on the other side of a main road, with the assistance of a corrupt guide-book, an hereditary short-sight, and the admonitions of local rustics. But when one of them, like Crow's Hall, lies nine miles from the nearest railway station, one mile from anything that by a strained courtesy can be called a road, and one mile also from any other house inhabited by man, woman, or child, its site must be allowed to be recondite, it may not be justifiably supposed not to exist. The legendary searches of Long Ago recur to the memory of the enthusiast engaged on this sort of expedition. He wonders how Jason can have been so simple-minded as to start on his golden voyage of discovery !—how the Knights of the Round Table can have stored themselves with sufficient courage to set out on their more sacred search !

And Crow's Hall, when at last lighted upon (by the help of an inefficient railway service, a village cart drawn by a Suffolk Pegasus, who seems to have attained to the age if not to the speed of that fabled flier, and some local directions modelled seemingly on Lancelot Gobbo's instructions to Lorenzo in the *Merchant of Venice*),—Crow's Hall, when at last lighted upon, will repay the long tedium of misdirected travel, and absolve the traveller from the guilt of the many curses loud, not low, vented on long and misguiding ways. Seen in full summer, this home of a country Knight of four hundred years ago looks like a house half built of flowers. They spring everywhere in a prodigal profusion from its grey brick-work. Tennyson's line, "Flower in the crannied wall," takes a full and floral form here in a mass of bloom which bursts from the walls of the old house, from the walls of the old moat, and from underneath the brick and steeply pitched roof. Flowers are rampant everywhere in this solitary seclusion, but they, like the old house which they so radiantly adorn, are flowers of the old world. No modern horticultural introductions are to be seen at Crow's Hall. No orchid raises his abnormal head. He would be as out of place in this old-world scene as would a jerry-builder bearing land plots in his hand. Old fashions please the old place best. Old fruit trees cast a luscious shade in the old-world orchard, which is surrounded on three sides by a moat 9 feet deep. Old-fashioned grass walks, fragrant with sweet-smelling herbs, intersect and limit the old-world pleasaunce. Old wine rich with historic memories should recondite in the cellar. As to the flowers, sweet-william, stocks, carnations are the wear here. These were


Bridge over Moat

CROW'S HALL

the favourite flowers in Cavalier days. And the house is full of Cavalier memories.

They are memories, dimmed with age and misfortune, of a succession of gallant owners who sacrificed themselves for an impossible loyalty and for a lost cause, and the story of whose deeds of unavailing self-sacrifice and bravery has for the most part been effaced from all public record by the envious fingers of Time. The name of Sir Charles Bassingbourne Gawdy will not be found in the *Child's Guide to Knowledge*, or in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, or in any well-known contemporary history of the Great Civil War. Yet this gallant Lord of Crow's Hall wore the crimson scarf of Charles the First in many of those hand-to-hand skirmishes, into which form of disjointed warfare the main current of civic strife passed, in the Eastern Counties, and in Suffolk particularly; and seldom to the advancement of the King. The royal campaign here could only confine itself to a series of ambuscades, or desperate midnight forays, carried out in country not adapted for the purpose, and in which the enemy practically sprang from the soil. It is said that Sir Charles Bassingbourne Gawdy did so much for his royal master as to undergo a siege in this moated house. One side of a building too substantial to have been effaced by Time, is said to owe its absence to Cromwellian cannon. It is possible that this may be so; but I do not think it would have been the result of a regular siege. Crow's Hall would not in the military view of the day have been considered a defensible house. Now that artillery had been introduced, the moat no longer sufficed to make a place safe. Had Sir Charles really stood a siege, he would never have paid the seventeen hundred and eighty pounds which he did pay, as a delinquent, and die on the stroke of midnight 1650, peacefully in his bed. Both he and his garrison would have been put to the sword for attempting to hold an indefensible position. If Roundhead cannon worked the destruction they are said to have done on Crow's Hall, it was probably in a round or two in the way of reprisal for a Cavalier foray which had been successful, or for an ambuscade which had not missed its mark. The great guns were then limbered up by sour-faced cannoniers, and dragged by great Suffolk horses to a wider range of action. Such a form of punishment for individual acts of loyalty was often inflicted on the country houses of Cavaliers, in parts of the country where the war had broken itself up into segments. And it was often inflicted when the owner was not at home. A cannon ball or two was left like a card. And like a card, it was left as a reminder.

Though Sir Charles Bassingbourne Gawdy had fought the good fight unavailingly, and though his name seems written in water, he was fortunate in not surviving his royal master for more than a year (that they might not survive him so long was the common wish of Cavaliers of the old type), and Crow's Hall seems still fragrant with the memory of this departed warrior. The house, however, possesses factors of interest other than those of personal association, and they deserve to be dwelt upon with some detail. The exterior walls of most of these moated houses of

England are all that is, in most cases, left for the lover of old buildings to study. The interiors have been subjected to a restoration either frankly and entirely modern, or to a praiseworthy attempt to antiquely reconstruct which has entirely missed its mark. The same remark, it may be said in passing, applies to the other old houses of the country whose history is not surrounded by a moat. Of these, Haddon Hall and Penshurst can alone reveal interiors reflecting the habits of their founders, and the periods in which they were built. Penshurst is indeed a remarkable example in this direction, and its profusely furnished interior, which perfectly shows us how our ancestors ate, sat, slept, and drank, when Elizabeth was Queen, gives it claim to be considered the most perfect non-moated show house in England.

As a house perfectly moated, Crow's Hall can confer the same hardly-to-be-priced favour. The interior of a Knight's moated house of the sixteenth century is preserved intact, and to the unspeakable benefit of future antiquarian enthusiasts, within these stout oak doors. Every detail of the social life of that Yesterday so long gone by is reflected by the furniture, can be read from it as if from a book! The latches are still on the old bedroom doors. The stairway which leads up to these quaint rooms which once echoed to jolly Cavaliers' snores or to the sighs of Cavalier maidens dreaming on St. John the Baptist's Eve of the destined yet unknown lover, is, in my experience, unique. Not only does it give on to the courtyard, without any opposing door (a fact suggesting the necessity of a hasty entrance or exit when

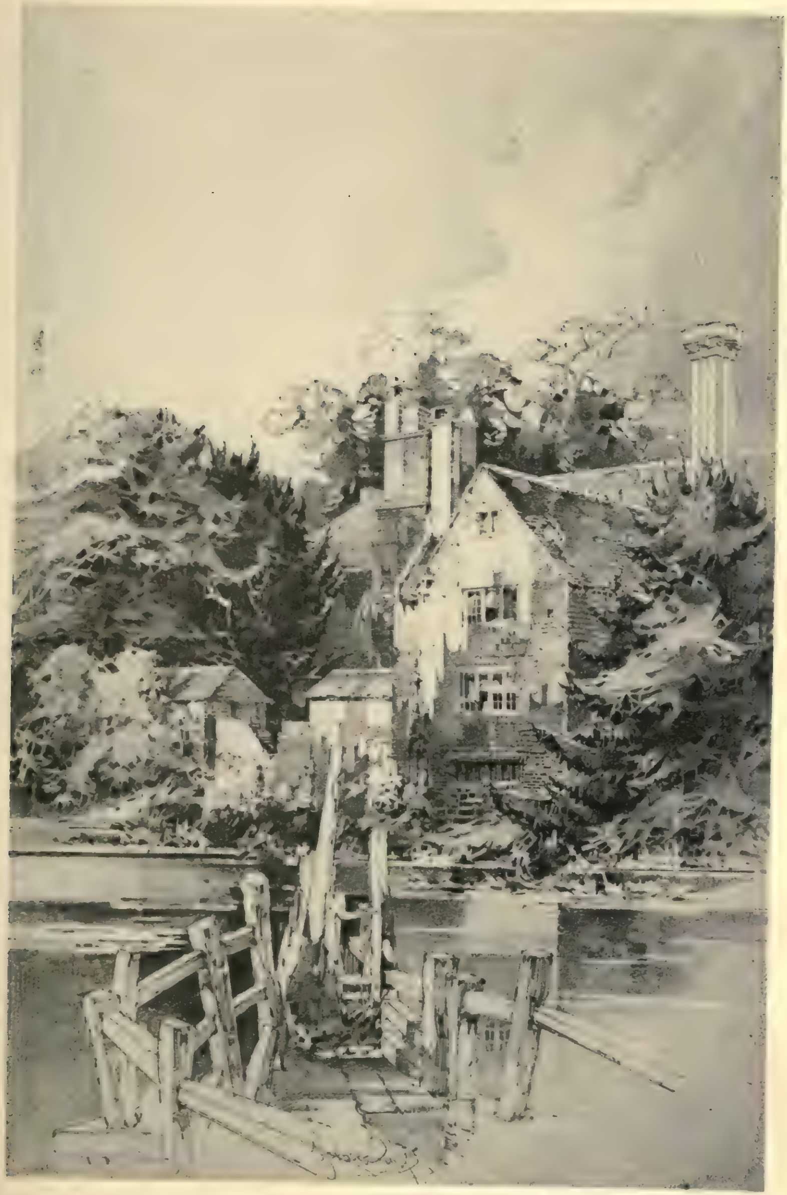
Charles the First was King), but each stair is of itself a beam of solid oak. This last touch is very indicative of the interior of Crow's Hall. Solidarity is everywhere. And also everywhere, in house, in garden, in moat, are memories of the Civil War and of the gallants of England who took part in it.

Singularly enough, however, a rumour which can hardly be classed as evidence, it is so vague, and yet is so firmly planted in the countryside that it can hardly be despised, connects the house with another kind of warrior than a Cavalier ; and tells at the same time of a very different sphere of activity than skirmishes of Roundhead and Cavalier in Suffolk lanes, when it suggests that Crow's Hall was once tenanted by the great Earl of Chatham. The absence of documentary evidence, or the non-discovery of it up to the present time of speaking, need not in this instance give the insister on truth too abrupt a pause. The great statesman, who is said to have conferred an added honour on this moated house, in those strange accesses of silence and of melancholy which came upon him at intervals, which separated him for months together, both from his highest political aspirations and his staunchest political friends, had a habit of secluding himself in out-of-the-way places, where he brooded in a gloomy silence, and paid no attention whatever to the infrequently appearing post. Once thus secluded, he rarely opened a letter which by chance might come into his hand. He never or seldom answered it. Crow's Hall may have been a witness of postal assaults on retired statesmen which have left no trace behind them. Some stray letters dated from this old house in answer to an unusually frenzied appeal from party passion may be in existence, may have been seen by other inquirers as to "What is Truth?" but they have not been seen by the present writer. But it is pleasant to think that the great Chatham may at one time have been a tenant —pleasant to picture the isolation of this political eagle whose flaming glances made the most brazen foreheads at once abase themselves. The calmness and quiet of the house and gardens would have soothed that hurt brain. Or was it the painful great toe that troubled the greatest orator and statesman of the age? Some say that the cause of Chatham's strange disappearances, and accompanying fits of melancholy, arose from suppressed gout; and that when his majestic great toe swelled, the cloud passed from his great intellect. But whether it was suppressed gout or melancholy which drove the great statesman into exile, let us believe that Chatham suffered and recovered from one or the other of the two complaints at this lonely moated house, on the pages of whose history even its Cavalier owners left such a faint and fading mark, and in whose strange atmosphere of isolation everything seems half-forgotten.

IX

PLUMPTON PLACE

THERE are many ways of finding a moated house, and many more ways of missing them. In their strange seclusion lies much of their charm, and few of the houses of this kind are more secluded than Plumpton Place, though it lies but a stone's-throw from the main road between Lewes and Ditching. It was once found in the following way. A visitor from a distant part of England happened to be spending a summer in the immediate neighbourhood. He had architectural leanings, and had walked many miles to see the various fine churches of the district, whose square towers are as suggestive of Norman and strenuous days as their quiet and green churchyards are the reverse. Yet for three months of his residence in this part of Sussex he had never heard, even though his pilgrimages after Norman churches were well known and well laughed at, that a moated house, and a singularly picturesque one, added interest to the countryside. Nor, curiously enough, was it his love for architecture which led him to a discovery of this treasure, which lay veiling its forlorn beauty within a mile and a half of the cottage where he was

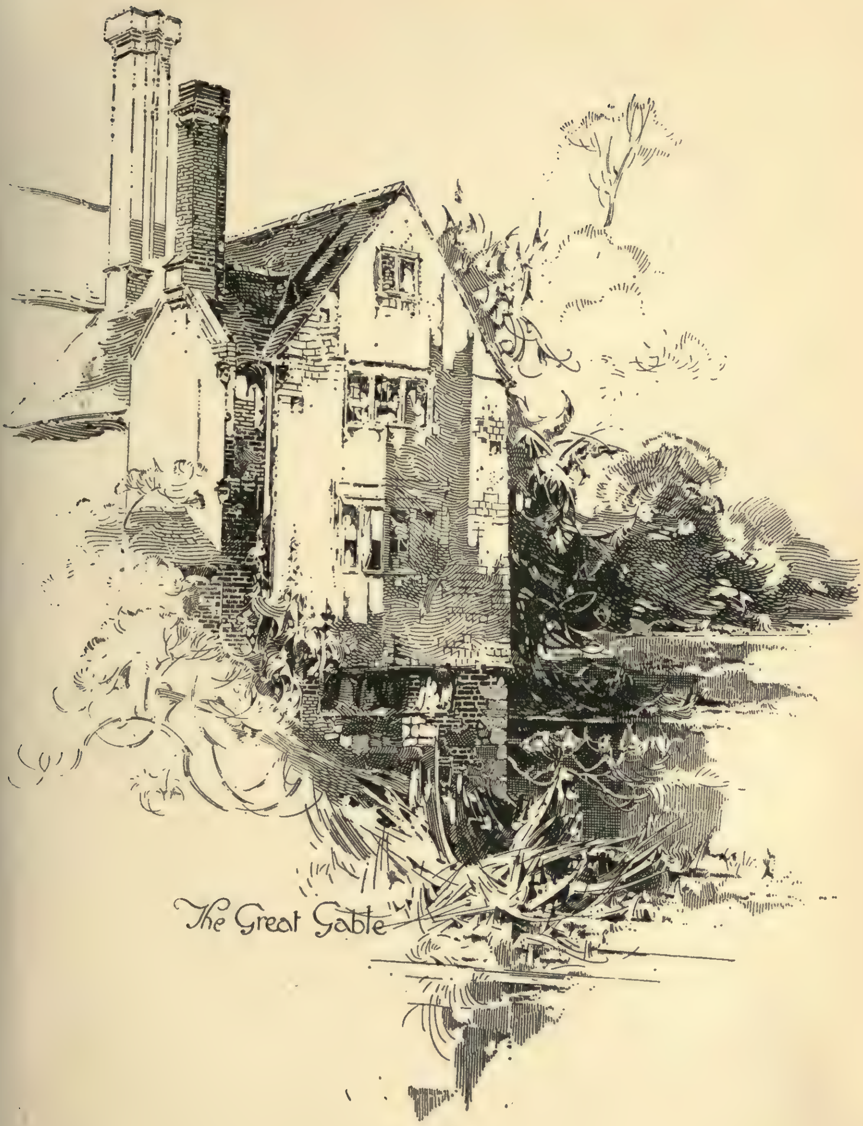


PLUMPTON PLACE

passing the summer. It must be mentioned that he had another leaning besides a liking for fine buildings. He was particularly fond of catching a fine trout. This craving coming upon him one day, when a wet southerly wind blew from the South Downs, and raised recollections of Izaak Walton's most inspired moments of calculated perfidy, he asked the man who came to look after his garden whether there was any place near where an architect tired of looking at Norman churches might feast his eyes on a trout stream. After a prolonged pause occupied in head scratching, he was told that there was no stream nearer than Lewes, but that there was a farmhouse a mile and a half off with a pond in front of it. The visitor, athirst for fishing, armed himself with certain offensive weapons prescribed by the prophet Walton, and started off. He saw pike possibilities looming. He found Plumpton Place.

Compton Winnyates is called "the house in a hole"; Ightham Moat stands in the cleft of a gorge. Plumpton Place lies in a rural seclusion so complete that it may be said to hide itself in a covert. A plantation of trees on its south side prevents anyone from seeing what sort of a house it is even if he chanced to be an antiquarian perched on the top of the almost overhanging South Downs. That exquisite range of hills which screens the weald of Sussex from the sea, and yet at the same time pays it that tribute of brine blown across turf and thyme, which forms the finest human and agricultural tonic in the world, keeps guard over this hidden moated house like some warder. Nowhere in their long range of graceful undulations is the beauty of the South Downs so fully seen as in the five short miles of springy turf which separate Ditchling Beacon from Lewes. Fanned continually by breezes and rains from the seas, these hills, which White of Selborne admired more than ever, even after a view of the Alps, always, even in the most torrid summer, afford perfect going to man and beast. The turf, as it is trod upon, springs beneath the footstep. And why owners of racehorses send their studs to Newmarket when this sort of training-ground lies readier to their hand, must continue to remain a matter of conjecture, till racing men begin to think reasonably, till the absurdity of the starting-gate is abolished, and till owners who possess valuable studs cease to leave everything connected with them in their trainers' hands. Meanwhile the noble range of the South Downs keeps watch over Plumpton Place.

The approach to this house in ambush is down a narrow lane about 30 yards in length. This is a passage from the high road which can be struck quite at a venture, or missed, even after the most careful directions, as the case may be. The deep Sussex hedgerows on either side of the way are crowded in summer with a profusion of wild flowers. But we are not for the moment on a botanical expedition intent. We are in search of architecture. And presently a barn and some outbuildings suggest the neighbourhood of a farm. Now, through the overhanging elms, a fugitive glance is caught of grey buildings, not expected to represent anything particular. But the road makes a sudden turn, and


The Great Gable

PLUMPTON PLACE

you are almost in the Plumpton moat itself. Surprise assuaged having given place to observation, the visitor finds that the Plumpton moat washes the walls of the house on two sides, and on the northern side opens out into a wide mere which represents the Sussex gardener's "pond in front of a farmhouse."

Yet it is in truth one of Nature's show places without any need of advertisement, though, as if for the unselfish purpose of giving a chance visitor an opportunity of seeing its beauties from every point of view, a shaded footpath leads round the moat, and also round the lake into which the moat opens. Every aspect of the house is thus to be seen, through the help of a convenience never intended for such an artistic purpose, and which is taken advantage of by stray tourists about three times a year. More frequent visitations are prescribed to lovers of the picturesque. Everywhere this class of sight-seers will meet their reward. Perhaps the first thing which will strike them and make them consult their memory or their guide-books is the remains of a short avenue of yews which must have been standing in its full completeness when, on the 24th of May 1264, the fog clearing suddenly off the South Downs and rolling seawards showed to Henry the Third the not altogether inspiring sight of Earl Simon's men, with black crosses on breast and back, kneeling in prayer before they rushed into the battle of Lewes. The streets of that beautiful old Sussex town ran blood for many hours after Fate had given his final arbitrament on the Barons' Wars. Henry the Third viewed this desultory street-fighting from the Castle's keep. He was shortly afterwards in the safer custody of the victorious Simon de Montford. Lūs, it may be remarked in passing, is the proper pronunciation of this Sussex town's name, and not Lewes, as is ordinarily preferred. As a witness to this statement let Tennyson be quoted,—Tennyson, the greatest of all the Victorian poets, and impeccable in the matter of rhyme:—

"And you, my Lords, you make the people muse
In doubt if you be of our Barons' breed—
Were those your sires who fought at Lewes?
Is this the manly strain of Runnymede?"

To return to the beauties of Plumpton Place. A stone balustrade of a much more recent date than the historic event above referred to, and on the right-hand side of the entrance, overhangs the moat, and must many a time have afforded an agreeable rest for leaning and whispering lovers, when the June moon had turned the dark moat to a glory, and guardians or parents, unsuspicious and carousing, had lulled themselves into a false security in what must have been a noble banqueting hall. Fishermen now whisper to each other from this balustrade in tones even more hushed, in all the genial *cameraderie* of their craft, and intent on landing quite another kind of fish. How best to catch carp would have been the subject of their *tête-à-têtes.* This golden-scaled and particularly shy object of the angler's ambitions, first breathed the air of England (if fish can be said to breathe at all, or breath can be drawn under water) in this Plumpton moat. And a recent suggestion that this fact is not one, needs at least ten thousand years' purgatorial fire to cleanse it from deliberate misstatement.

This fact needs to be stated with insistence, since the man who put the first carp seen in England into the Plumpton moat was a character. His name was Leonard Mascall. He owned this old house, and died in it when Sir Francis Drake was plundering Corunna. Before this piratical episode in England's naval history, Leonard Mascall had had long opportunities of doing a little plundering on his own account. His sphere of practical utility, however, was not devoted to the high seas. The kitchen of no less a reverend person than Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, was the arena in which the guilt of opportunity offered itself; and it would be laying too much trust on the weakness of erring humanity to suggest even for a moment that Leonard did not seize that opportunity with both hands. Suffice it to say, without indecent research into an Archbishop's kitchen accounts, that Leonard Mascall became unaccountably rich; and having escaped the accident of being thrown out of employment for a dishonesty of which he seems to have been manifestly guilty, he devoted the remainder of his leisure to angling and literary pursuits.

To these pastimes he added a third. And having presented an ungrateful country with a new fish, which lives to such an age that some of its species still swim in the pools of Versailles and date from Louis the Fourteenth, and is indued with such a cunning that it can hardly ever be caught (carp is referred to), Leonard Mascall did a little gardening in spare hours on a plot of ground of which nothing now remains, and in a moment of fertile invention or theft (probably the latter) presented his country with the Golden Pippin. This double achievement must have been the cause of much self-advertisement, and of congratulations equally well designed, for future use in many a banquet in what was once the great hall of Plumpton Place. This once noble room stretches to almost the length of the entire house towards the north. But Time mars all; and its fine proportions are now divided and subdivided again to give labourers lodgings. In this restoration is shown a modern way of adapting what our ancestors called the "solar" (or in plain words the only room in the house comfortable enough to make a sitting-room of) to requirements purely modern. The simple difference between our ancestors and ourselves in the way of converting a large room to various other uses, is that they hung up an arras without defacing the building, while we deface a building by putting up walls. Twelve families can live in separate compartments in what used to be the banqueting hall of Plumpton Place; and they, if local report can be relied on, have the bad grace to say (out of hearing of their landlord) that that place is unhealthy. Leonard Mascall does not seem to have found it so, since he lived to a ripe old age; and in the intervals of stocking his moat with carp, planting the Golden Pippin for the first time in England, and filching from the kitchen of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, was able to deliver himself safely of several learned works. Perhaps the basting he got in early days before the Archiepiscopal kitchen fire hardened a naturally healthy constitution. The breezes blown from the South Downs over Plumpton Place mitigated the effects of this youthful ordeal by fire, without destroying its inspiring force. A burst of literary activity was the final outcome. And the moated house at Plumpton, in due and calculated intervals, gave to an admiring and expectant world the following works of erudition and of interest :—

1. *A Booke of the Arte and Manor howe to plant and graffe all sorts of trees, howe to set stones and sowe Peppines to make wylde trees to graffe on.*

2. *The Husbandlye ordring and Governmente of Poultrie.*

3. *A Booke on Fishing with hooke and line.*

4. *Sundrie Engines and Trappes to take Polecats, Buzzards, Rats, Mice, and of all instruments thereto belonging.*

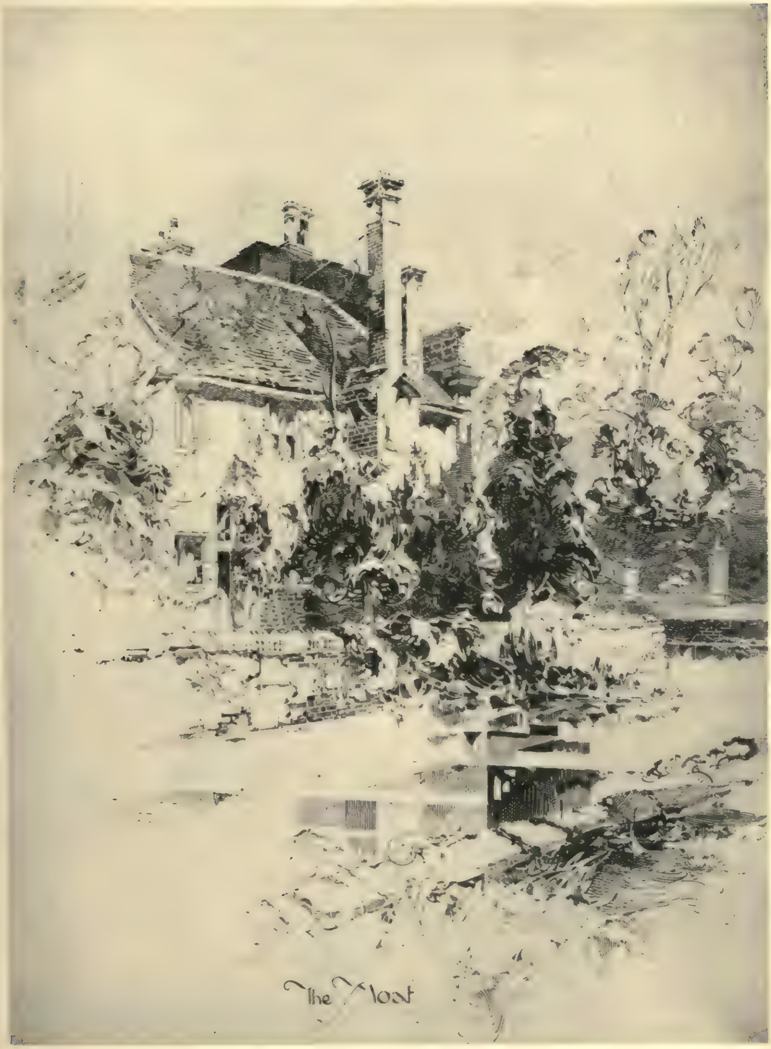
May the earth lie light on this ingenious author who was buried over three hundred and nineteen years ago! Horticulturists should honour him. Fishermen should never be ashamed to clasp his ghostly hand,—especially when they have been fortunate enough to catch a carp.

X

COMPTON BEAUCHAMP

"THE Monks' Walk," by which name is known a fine avenue of beech trees, suggests that this Berkshire moated house has an earlier and ecclesiastical history springing from a remoter foundation than can at present be traced Monks, so far as moated houses are concerned, mean nothing—we say it with reverence, since Reformation days. Yet seven experts out of ten would declare that Compton Beauchamp is a Jacobæan foundation and was never anything else. Architects however, like doctors, are prone to disagree, and a minority assign an earlier date to some parts of this moated manor nestling under the Wiltshire downs. But nobody at any rate pays much attention to the Palladian restoration which has been, so to speak, fixed like a pack on the back of the original building, whether the old house can trace its foundation to pre-Elizabethan days, or must be content with the later period of her Scotch and besotted successor.

And yet, eyesore as it is to people who have so little classical leaven in their architectural taste as to prefer gabled buildings, it is this very Palladian addition which recalls the memory of Compton



COMPTON BEAUCHAMP

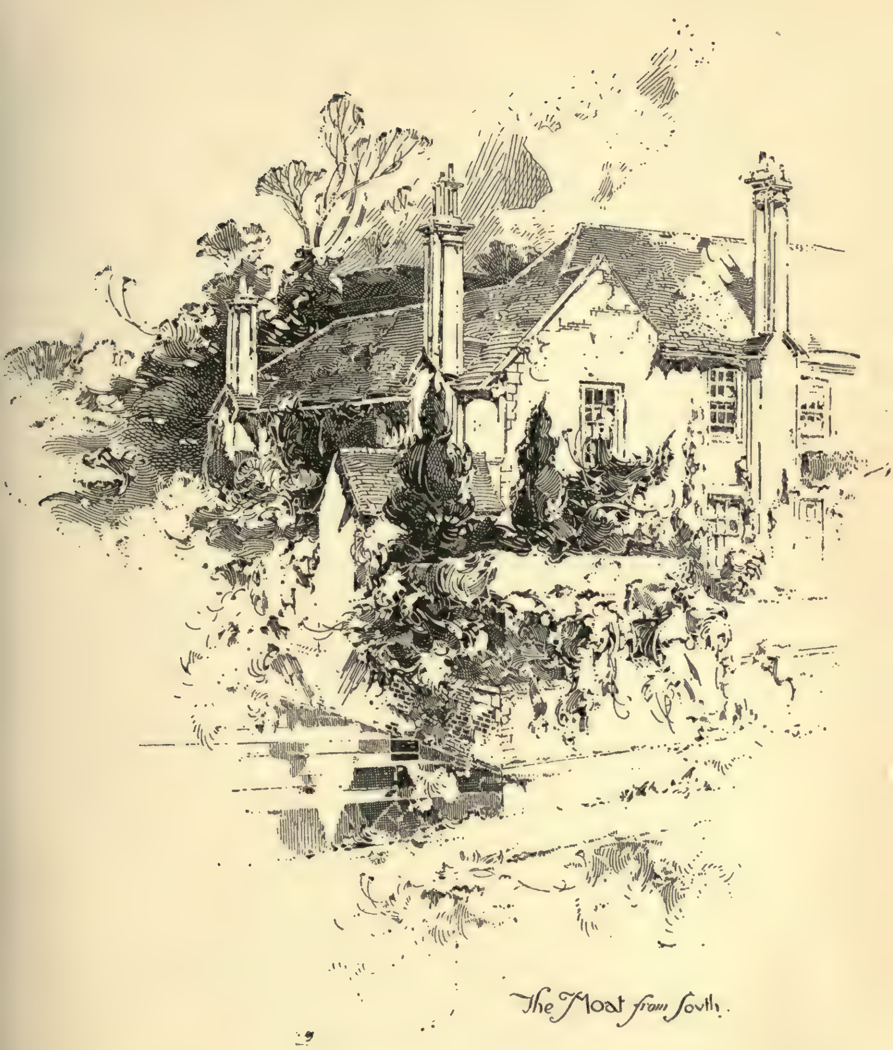
Beauchamp's most characteristic owner. The late Vice-Chancellor Bacon is not referred to, though his reputation still lives as one of the wisest and wittiest of judges—nor is reference made to Judge Bacon, who both as Judge and proprietor worthily upholds the last of the Vice-Chancellors' reputation for ripe legal knowledge growing in the congenial atmosphere of wit and hospitality. For the Palladian front at Compton Beauchamp recalls the memory of a lady who once owned the house, in the agreeable rôle of an heiress, and whose individuality was so marked that the Palladian part of Compton Beauchamp, which should have been put up in her day, impresses itself upon the memory; associates itself indissolubly with the fair, eccentric, rich, and (if the modernism may be permitted without the accusation of vulgarity) "doggy" owner.

Her name was Miss Anne Richards, and as Miss Anne Richards she was known till the day of her death, an inevitable event rounding a long life lived in a generous yet exact accordance with her own views of men and things. This is only another way of saying that Miss Richards was an extremely rich and sensible woman, who, finding herself possessed of a fine estate and plenty of money, chose to keep the pleasures accruing from both, after proper hospitable and charitable reservations, entirely under her own control. Not that it is suggested for a moment that this Wiltshire heiress was not ardently wooed. The plain point is that she was not won. She resisted, on the contrary, a long succession of fiery not to say port-wine attacks on her hand and fortune, holding out gallantly to the last in an age when the word gallantry had some meaning. Hers were the days

> "When Courtiers galloped o'er three counties
> Their last night's partner to behold
> And humbly hope she'd caught no cold."

Many of these irresistible heroes rode up to the fine entrance of Compton Beauchamp, full of ardour and hope, only to retire from it disconsolate, and meditating in what other quarter of the fine downlands of three counties a wife with a fine figure, face, and fortune was to be procured, who had also an impeccable taste on the great questions of horses and dogs. But however unfortunate the issue of their errand, it had to be made in the most solemn state—a state prescribed and girt about by the rule of a rigid etiquette which was widely recognized as inviolable. If, metaphorically speaking, they had to retire from their assaults on Miss Richards' fine purse and fine person with their tails between their legs, they had to advance to that disastrous and unequal contest with their servants carrying their wigs in a box before them. These they put on at the lodge gate and with the strictest deportment which an age of fine manners required (and could also—which is another matter—supply), and with their heads dressed, even after a long ride, *de rigueur*, stalked solemnly up a noble approach to meet their inevitable fate. Attack succeeded attack, but "Væ victis!" was the inevitable comment.

But this unyielding and unwedded Penelope of Berkshire had other duties to perform than those of


The Moat from South.

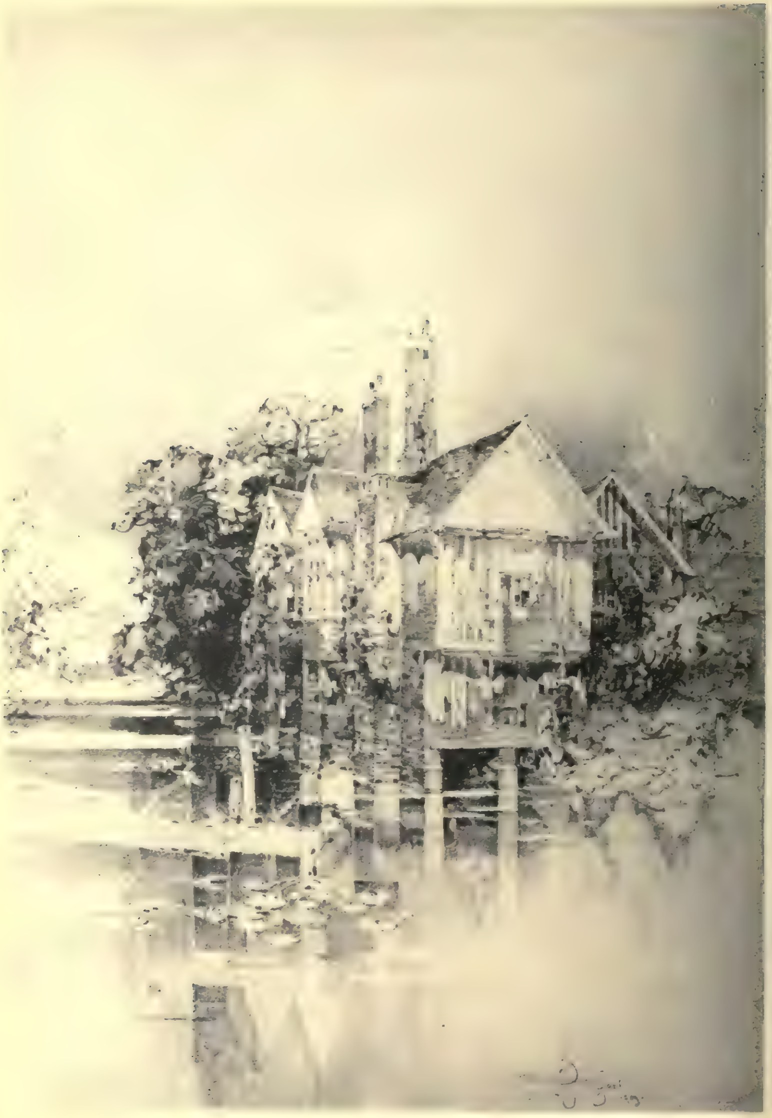
COMPTON BEAUCHAMP

persistently and good-naturedly refusing the proffers of gallants who proposed to marry her for her money under the pretence of taking her for better or worse. In her spare moments, when she was not attending to the kennels or the stables—moments so arduously employed that it is a wonder that she had any to spare—she carved in oak, painted in oils, and played the violin. For fear that doubt should be raised as to an activity so varied it may be stated that it will be found fully set forth, with a properly complimentary comment, in the Earl of Wilton's *Sports and Pursuits of the English.* This noble author, being a sportsman of a type long since vanished, himself lays particular stress on one of Miss Anne Richards' favourite hobbies (she was always riding one of these sort of horses when she was not driving a coach), which should endear her memory for ever with those who have any love for the noble sport of Coursing. To this she was indeed passionately addicted. One of the fine and swelling uplands which rise above Compton Beauchamp gave the name to perhaps the earliest Coursing Meeting chronicled. On to this particular down, or on to one of the many others in the neighbourhood, Miss Richards used to be driven in her coach (rheumatism victimized her at an early period in her life) to watch her favourite pastime. She had the opportunity of seeing it in perfection. On those downlands of three famous English counties (Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Berkshire are meant) finer hares are bred than are ever to be seen at Aintree; and the natural rise and fall of the ground gives both them and their pursuers an equally balanced advantage. Directly a Wiltshire or Berkshire hare finds himself in the strenuous predicament of being coursed, he makes at top speed for a rise in the ground. If he reaches it, the greyhounds know that all is over. The converse of the proposition is equally fatal to the hare. Coursing in its ideal form should undoubtedly be seen on downlands.

Miss Richards must have seen much of the sport, and in this perfection, before the inevitable summons came to her to depart to where it is to be hoped that even hunting-grounds are happier, and to leave Compton Beauchamp, to say nothing of the world, without however leaving a husband behind her to ostentatiously deplore her loss, and more ostentatiously spend her money. A few concluding remarks may be made on her tenancy of Compton Beauchamp. "Doggy" has not been an epithet applied to her without due grounds. One example in support of this assertion will suffice. Compton Beauchamp was in this lady's lifetime a veritable dogs' home. Dogs were in fact everywhere, and very often where the cook and the housemaids did not wish to find them. The complete canine usurpation which prevailed may best perhaps be described by simply saying, that every servant, when he or she entered the house, was asked if they liked these friends of man. The negative or affirmative reply ensured instant dismissal or long service.

The outward aspect of this good-natured though eccentric lady's hobbies is one of great beauty. It is deeply moated, the bed of the moat being paved with brick, as well as its sides; and the gardens and the lawns which lie between the house and the downs are so cunningly and yet artistically arranged as at the same time to be practically sheltered from every hostile wind that blows, and yet to catch every ray of even an English sun. This is to say a good deal for Berkshire. This county is rich in historical associations, though they are not always sunny. Romance, however, breathes from many of its uplands. Littlecote Hall, with its legend of unequalled horror, is within easy distance; the lone ale-house on the Berkshire moors recalls the Scholar Gipsy and at the same time Matthew Arnold's exquisite elegy. And Compton Beauchamp, with all its native beauty of site and surroundings, has to pay another and an outside toll to the magic influence of Romance. It lies quite close to a well-known scene in perhaps the finest of the Waverley Novels.

The Hill of the White Horse almost overshadows the house. It constantly attracts the curiosity of visitors for miles round. But the novel of *Kenilworth* will always appeal more directly to people of an imaginative bent than this monument of a doubtful victory cut into the chalk, and those who in these days of a degenerated taste can still read their Scott, will remember that in this immediate neighbourhood Edmund Tressilian had his first and strange interview with Wayland Smith. The site of the smith's subterranean smithy is still shown by gaping rustics ignorant of what shrine they are disclosing, or why literary visitors should stand enrapt. This is not the place to consider at whom Sir Walter pointed when he drew the character of Doctor Alasco, who, it may be remembered, had previously been a tenant of this underground smithy, and had unconsciously inducted Wayland Smith into some of the Black Art. But in Alasco the celebrated or infamous Italian Doctor Julio was no doubt hinted at. Julio—always in an ominous attendance on the great Earl of Leicester, to whose account so many Elizabethan sudden deaths were justly or unjustly laid. A contemporary tract supposed to have been written by Parsons the Jesuit throws quite a search-light of discovery or of slander on this physician or poisoner from Italy. Apart from this, the figure of Doctor Alasco with those of Wayland Smith and Tressilian remain the most lasting memories of Compton Beauchamp, in spite of its secluded garden full of an old-world charm, its clear and deep moat, and the personality of the genial and eccentric Miss Anne Richards, whose passion was Coursing;—who remained so determinately Virgin Queen of her small kingdom;—and who never allowed anybody to come to her house without taking a good meal away with them, to say nothing of a pot of the best home-brewed ale.



PARHAM HALL

XI

PARHAM

MANY people had to fly from England during the Marian persecutions. Among the number were a certain gentleman, by name Richard Bertie, and his wife, Catharine. This lady, who was the heiress of Parham, had already been the wife of the celebrated Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. The armour of this first tilter of his age is still to be seen in the Tower of London, and Henry the Eighth, in his prime, was only just able to hold his own against him. Charles Brandon was in fact the English Admirable Crichton of the Tudor period, and to have been the wife of such a man, to say nothing of the further experience of having succeeded in becoming his widow, was to have attained to no common lot in the experience of humanity. Catharine Bertie, however, versed as she must have been in the world's affairs, had to add a novel and final item to an already full list. Fugitives from the Smithfield fires, she and her husband went to a morning service at St. Willebroard's Church at Wesel. In the very porch of the church, a son was born to her. He was christened Peregrine, and was afterwards the celebrated

Lord Willoughby of Eresby, and as such, also Lord of Parham.

His arms are carved on the remarkable Tudor gateway which guards the entrance to his old Suffolk home, which lies in fine park-lands, is deeply moated, and dates back at least two centuries before Tudor architects laid a stone to the gateway. The fame of this Peregrine, Lord Willoughby of Eresby, is chronicled in the history of the Low Country Wars, and in a book of poems called the *Suffolk Garland*, an edition of which was published in Ipswich so late as 1818.

One stanza may be sufficient to stimulate students :—

"Stand to it, noble pikemen,
And fence ye well about;
And shoot ye sharp, bold bowmen,
And ye will keep them out!
Ye muskets and caliver men
Do ye prove true to me,
We'll be the foremost in the fight."

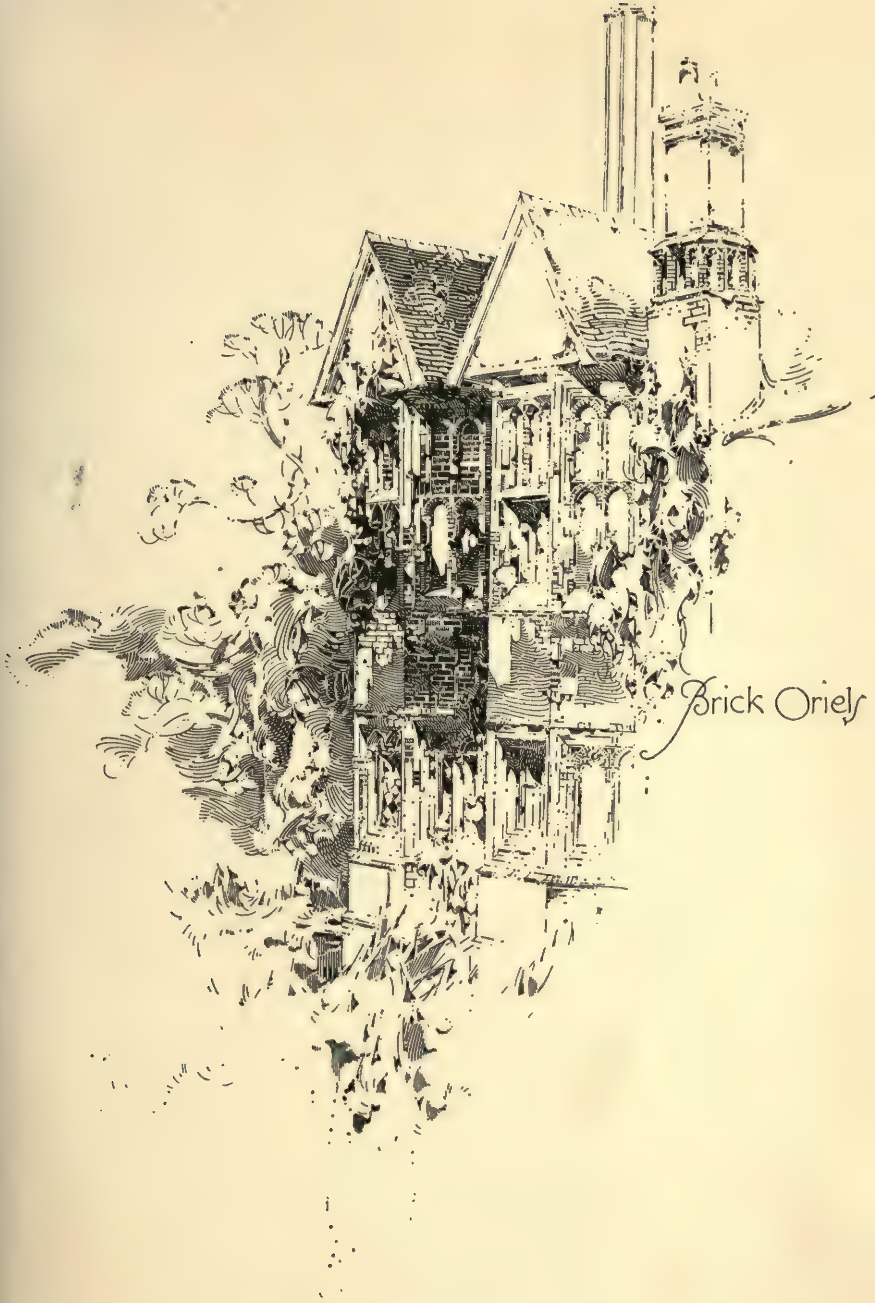
Peregrine, Lord Willoughby of Eresby and of Parham, seems always to have been in this position. And when it is remembered that the scene of action was what have been called "the loud Low Country Wars," and that the opponents of his pike, bow, musket, and caliver men were that redoubtable Spanish infantry, which had been drilled under Alva, and were at the moment fighting under the directions of the Prince of Parma, no wonder need be felt, in spite of the deficiencies of a local poet, that the Lord of Parham's military qualities were the admiration of all England, to say nothing of his native county of

Suffolk, which did not hesitate to celebrate them in indifferent verse.

When this man, born as he had been in a church porch, stood in the middle of his square to resist the attacks of the Prince of Parma, he was pitting his capacity as a commander against the greatest military genius of the age, and the courage of those soldiers which his own county of Suffolk had largely enlisted for him, against an infantry which had never met defeat in European war yet. The memory of successes so successive and so signal must have fired the eyes of this natural-born fighter as, at the close of campaigns in which his square of self-trained English infantry had never been broken, he let them rest on the grey walls of his Suffolk home. Parham is best seen with the eyes of this conqueror returning: thought of as the moated pavilion of this Paladin coming back from the wars. After having passed through the Tudor gateway which seems to have been built to celebrate one or all of his many triumphs, this conquering hero from the Low Countries rested grateful eyes once more on the home of his boyhood and the cradle of his military fame.

Parham would have appeared to his eyes like a house built in a pond. Water washes two sides of it, and in this water fishermen are often seen at work, as they often were no doubt in those Elizabethan times when Ridolfi the Italian banker and Government agent was drawing the Duke of Norfolk into a carefully manufactured plot, and the streets of Paris were streaming with blood on the night of St. Bartholomew, and England was helping the heroic

Netherlanders by land and sea, and Lord Willoughby was returning unscarred and triumphant from the noble part he had taken in that assistance which had been so long and so nearly fatally delayed. Perhaps he too, with the recollection of his gallant pikemen's doings in the Low Countries, took a turn at the Parham pike. Fishing is a meditative pastime, or was so in Lord Willoughby's days when the art of trolling had not been invented, and the standing up and wielding of a heavy rod was not necessary for the sport. Ground bait, a quaint hook carefully decorated, a good float, and a seat on the bank were all the equipments needed. I like to picture the gallant soldier fresh from the wars at this contemplative sport. The man who waited over and over again for the designedly postponed attacks of the Prince of Parma would not have been an impatient angler. He would have awaited the Parkham pikes' procrastination with soldierly calm. I suspect him, as he was a great organizer of commissariat, of having a flask of Rhenish in his fishing-basket. When he was tired of looking at his perfectly motionless float, he could raise his eyes, still full of the iron light of battle, and feast them with the incomparable satisfaction of the owner on the picturesque beauties of his moated house. He would not have seen the causeway across the moat, because it has only in late years been substituted for the drawbridge, which, we may be well assured, was raised at night with the strictest military punctuality, but his eyes would have rested on the picturesque gables which at Parham are particularly highly pitched, and on the splendid bay

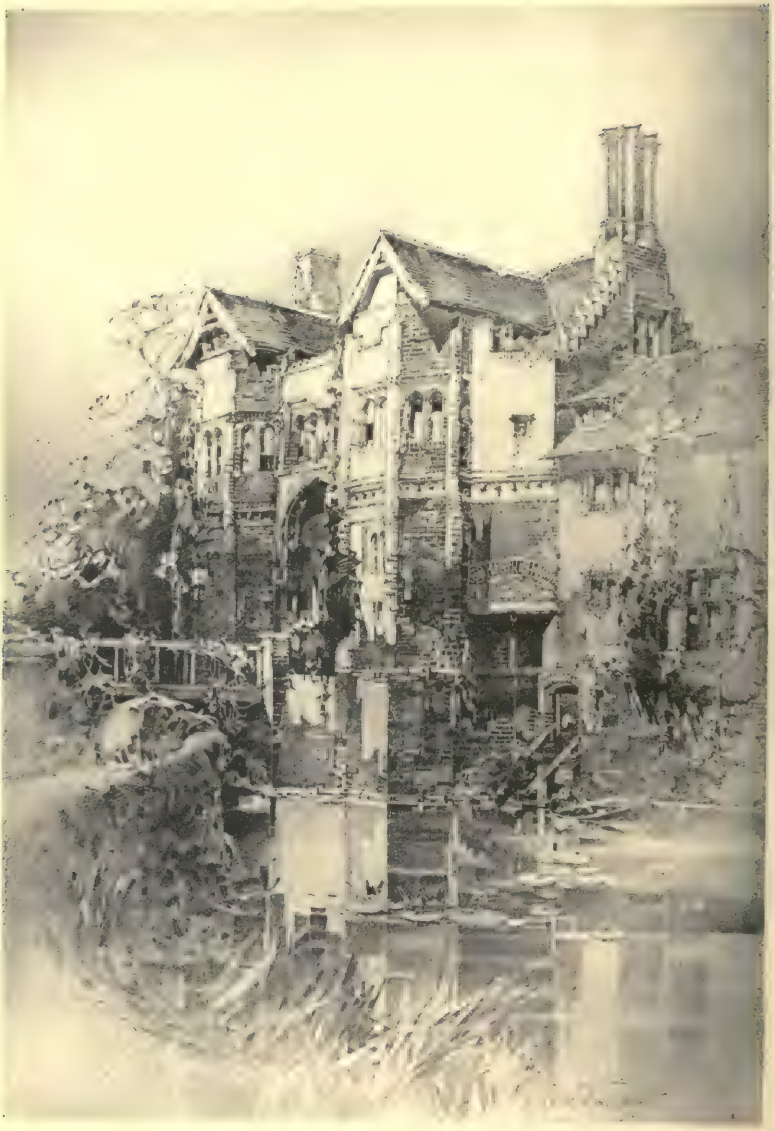

Brick Oriels

PARHAM HALL

windows which look out on the water-washed side of the house, and which spring from the moat itself. It may have occurred to him on looking at these bays that his ancestors who built the house far back in the times when Jack Cade was meditating his socialistic campaign, knew of the aid to health and good spirits which can be got by windows designed to admit plenty of light. He would now turn his eyes to his float and find that it had disappeared. The next moment he had lost a pike.

His hook having been readjusted, and a fresh decoy, in the form of ground bait, thrown into the scene of action, the reclined and meditative fisherman's thoughts would gradually take a more martial tinge, and as the Parham gables began to shine under a westering sun, he would stretch himself gratefully under that soothing influence, and with ears soothed by the slow lapping of water against the sides of the moat, fight, in fancy, some of his old battles again. The swarthy faces of Parma's picked infantry pressed once more right up to that inviolable line of English pikes, on which they sacrificed themselves again and again, but which even their splendid and disciplined valour had never been able to penetrate! Next before the half-sleeping soldier's eyes rose a vision of the sack of some Low Country town, with its accompaniments of desperate hand-to-hand fighting at street corners, the clash of steel on armour, the brazen clamour of the alarm bell, the screams of terrified women, the glare of houses going up in flames. The recollection of a certain ambuscade now presented a vivid picture of the great Duke of Parma himself, with his splendidly uniformed staff about him, reconnoitring a position in person, but annoyingly keeping just out of caliver range. The Duke's gold damascened armour shone like flame; he stroked the neck of the white charger he rode. Willoughby clearly saw once more the olive skin, the fine Italian features of the greatest captain of his age, as he leaned on one side to ask a question of one of his staff. Would no fortunate impulse urge the Prince twenty paces nearer that English ambush in which Willoughby's Suffolk caliver-men lay trembling with excitement and with weapons aimed for a fatal shot? No! After one long look at some rising ground on the left, shading his eyes with his gauntleted hand from the slanting rays of the sun, Parma says something to his staff, turns his white charger leisurely, slowly rides back to the Spanish lines! What an opportunity carefully calculated missed by the narrow margin of twenty paces! Now the Lord of Parham is, in his dreams, up to his knees in mud besieging some frontier town of Flanders. The rain falls unceasingly into the newly opened trenches. Even the sturdy Suffolk contingent as they march up and down the dreary lines can hardly restrain their curses at the Spaniards and at the weather. Worse and worse grows that pitiless downpour. Sir Peregrine starts at last from that sodden ground where he has thrown himself down to snatch a moment's rest. He rubs his eyes, finds himself wet through, his rod and line gone with a pike at the end of it, and the gables of Parham dripping a furious thunder-shower.

The Lord of Parham enters his picturesque home.



GEDDING HALL

XII

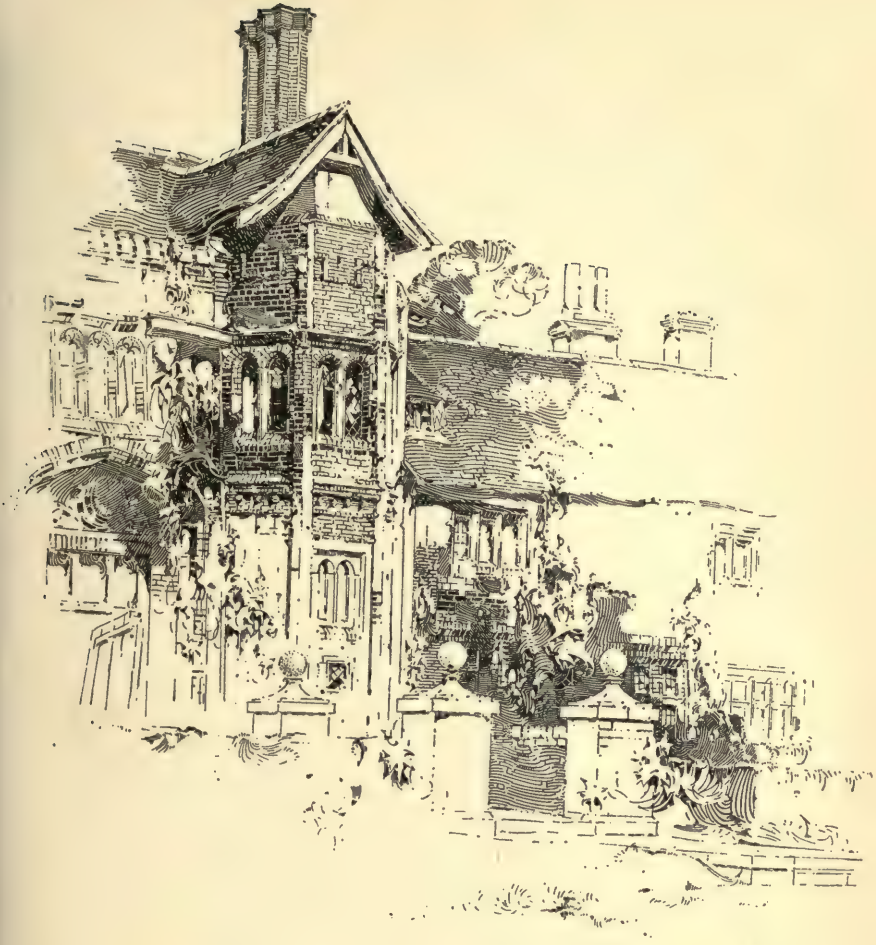
GEDDING

MARIANA might have looked from a casement of this typical moated grange, and every line of Tennyson's exquisite poem comes back to the memory at the first view caught of the lonely house. Poplars, silver green, shade one side of its old brick walls, which have no story to tell save that penned in the impalpable pages of surmise: the faces that glimmer through its doors seem not to be those of its inhabitants of to-day, but rather the people who lived in the place in that mystic period of "Once upon a Time," whose memories are not to be marked by dates, and whose history is mirrored only in the imagination. Footsteps still tread its upper floors, voices still call across the moat on which marish mosses cluster; but the footsteps seem the tread of long-departed guests, the voices but the faint and scarcely to be distinguished echoes from a vanished world.

And so Gedding stands apart from other moated houses in a remote and picturesque isolation. Even of the ancient race of the Bokenhams who are once said to have lived in it, nothing has been handed down but the name. A faint rumour connects the place with the presence of a literary priest about the year 1393, but the rumour soon fades into that dim atmosphere of mystery, which veils the place as if it were some shrine set apart from the curious and inquisitive, and dedicated to the purpose of a story that is never destined to be told. This house, if any house can, must tell its own tale. Stones must speak here in their suggestive whispers; grey gables nod consent to the story; affirmation be lent only by the low murmurs of the moat. We are in the Land Enchanted of Uncertainty. The full tide of historic event may have washed the walls of the old house as closely as its moat washes them now, but if it has so washed them, it has receded, and left no mark. There is no sign to be seen in the lonely reaches of the level landscape which evokes the memory of event; no local legend or countryside rumour which lends the faintest colour of human interest to this grey memorial of the past standing in solitude.

Generations have been born in it, and have at the fulness of time appointed gone the way of all flesh, or have been prematurely cut off from a destiny which promised a fairer fate by the blind Fury's abhorred shears. The pall has quaked, the slow funeral gone by, many a time over the wooden bridge across the moat. Many times as often, the casements must have shone with the jolly illuminings of many a wedding dance, and the grey walls echoed the festal sounds of marriage music. Village Hampdens may have dreamed here of stricken fields to which they were never to be called to strike a blow for liberty, and mute inglorious Miltons may have mused by the banks of the brimming moat on deathless poems destined never to see the printer's hands. What family attorneys, decorous in the formalities of wig, snuff, and legal jargon, have not drawn up wills here in favour of what greedy heirs, and which were yet fated to be pronounced against and ruthlessly set aside as testamentarily speaking of no value! What long succession of family feuds have not been settled here for the decent time being, only to break out again with renewed ardour! What pairs of lovers innumerable have not exchanged whispered vows in these corridors which have long ceased to echo their loitering tread! The mouse shrieks from the mouldering wainscot of that lovers' promenade now, or peers about from the crevice on the scene of those bygone gallantries. A square-headed doorway, close to the wooden bridge, and leading by four steps guarded by a handrail down to the moat, suggests possibilities of elopements in the house's history that can never be known: of a happy pair taking their future for better or worse into their own hands, and stealing furtively through this postern to wedded joy or misery quite unperceived; while guardians kept futile eyes suspiciously on the bridge; or were drinking in the room just overhead, in a final agreement that the marriage should never take place. Soldier sons, in the full tide of strength and manly beauty, have left despairing sweetheart or mother here, many a time in the old house's history: have crossed with martial swagger the wooden way to glory over the moat (transformed by the occasion into a temporary Bridge of Sighs). Gedding would have been "the palace on one hand" of this episode, sheltering who knows what treasures of beauty momentarily abandoned at country's call: "the prison on the other hand" was very likely at that moment yawning for its coming military occupant in France or Flanders. The walls of the old house suggest hundreds of such everyday scenes in the prolonged comedy of human life—suggest them, seem to smile or frown in assent or denial; but say nothing.

This is in truth what finally has to be said in this case of a home with no record, whose architectural side even calls for no particular comment, but whose general appearance is marked by an extreme and suggestive picturesqueness. The surrounding country heightens this effect, in its green expanses of rich meadow land, dotted here and there with poplars with their gnarled barks, and lapped in a silence unbroken except by the distant lowing of oxen. But the memory of Mariana is everywhere — not she of *Measure for Measure*, in that moated grange of hers "by St. Luke's," outside Shakespeare's imaginary Vienna (of all places in the world for a building of the kind), and to which the disguised duke of the play goes on his errand of justice—but the Mariana of the later poet, who has taken her and her moated grange from out those mid-European suburban surroundings, and reset them in some such type of English scenery as that which lies about Gedding and to the accompaniment of imperishable verse. As the memory of Tennyson's poem is the first impression given by the sight of this moated grange, so it remains the last, as the shadows lengthen across the



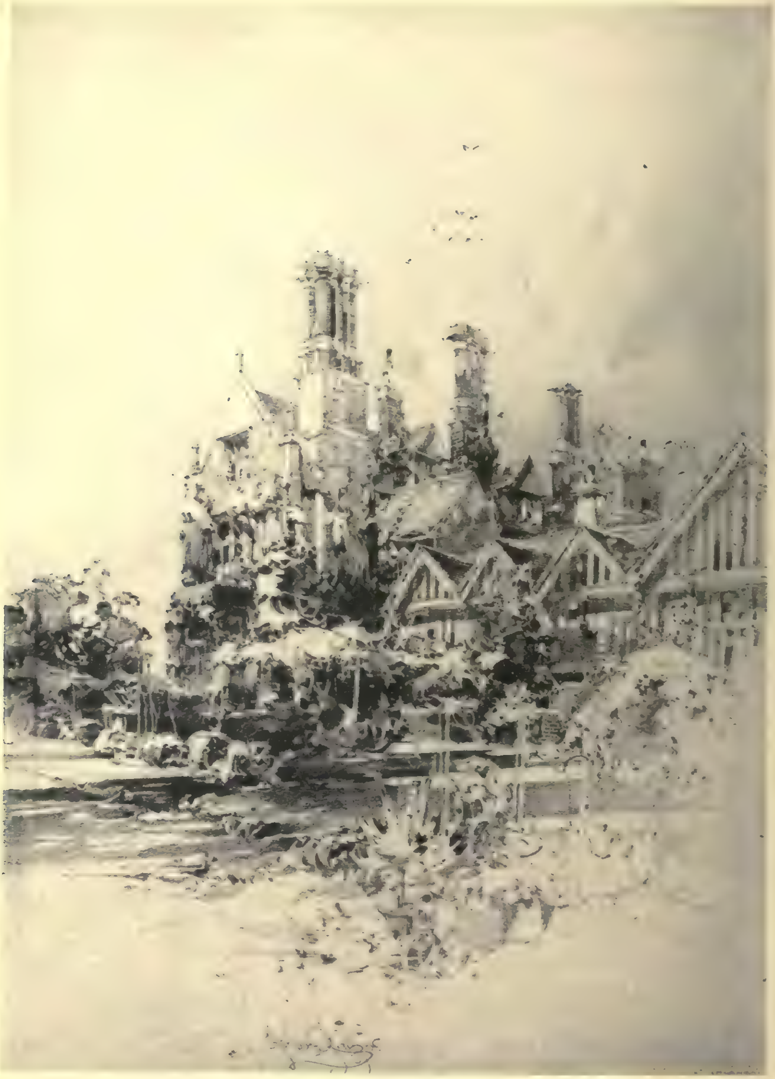
Gable and Oriel

GEDDING HALL

gleaming flats and the day slopes towards his chamber in the West. The treasures inexhaustible of that rich imagery recur to us; seem waltzed in whispers of approval from those grey brick walls of the old house, which can alone tell its story. The sluice with blackened water sleeps at our feet; gusty shadows sway in the casement curtains; the sound of the clinking latch is heard being uplifted: the broken sheds on one side of the building look sad and strange; and worn and weeded the ancient thatch, or the brick tiles crushed with blackest moss which at Gedding does duty for it. There is a dreariness about this lonely moated grange. Mariana is everywhere.

Her memory still haunts it, and that in spite of a recent and extremely tasteful restoration. And it is much to the credit of the present owner and his architectural advisers that the old house has been made habitable without destroying its strange and unique character. An Alderman is to be congratulated in this matter, and one who is also a Justice of the Peace. No Dogberry has laid his heavy and despoiling hand on an architectural feat which has changed a lonely and desolate moated grange into a habitable great place without defacing the romantic beauty of the earlier foundation. And so under Alderman Wakeley J.P.'s hospital rule the life of the decayed old moated grange has been renewed at the very moment when its last breath seemed about to be drawn. The faded memories of past festivities have risen from the dead, and put on the new garb of a genial modern entertaining. Life pulses through

Gedding once more. And the story of the house which has been told only as a surmise may now take a palpable form and move to its appointed goal on firm and fortunate feet. The casements will again shine with jolly illuminings ; the grey walls echo the festal sounds of marriage music ; lovers will exchange whispers in the long corridors ; modern Hampdens will dream here of a political Utopia never likely to be realized ; soldier sons will cross the moat seeking glory or our new Territorial Army. Hundreds of such everyday scenes in the prolonged comedy of human life will be played within the grey walls of Gedding restored. Modernity is a factor which must make itself felt. But one memory of the old house it will never be able to destroy. And that is the memory of Mariana. She is still everywhere.



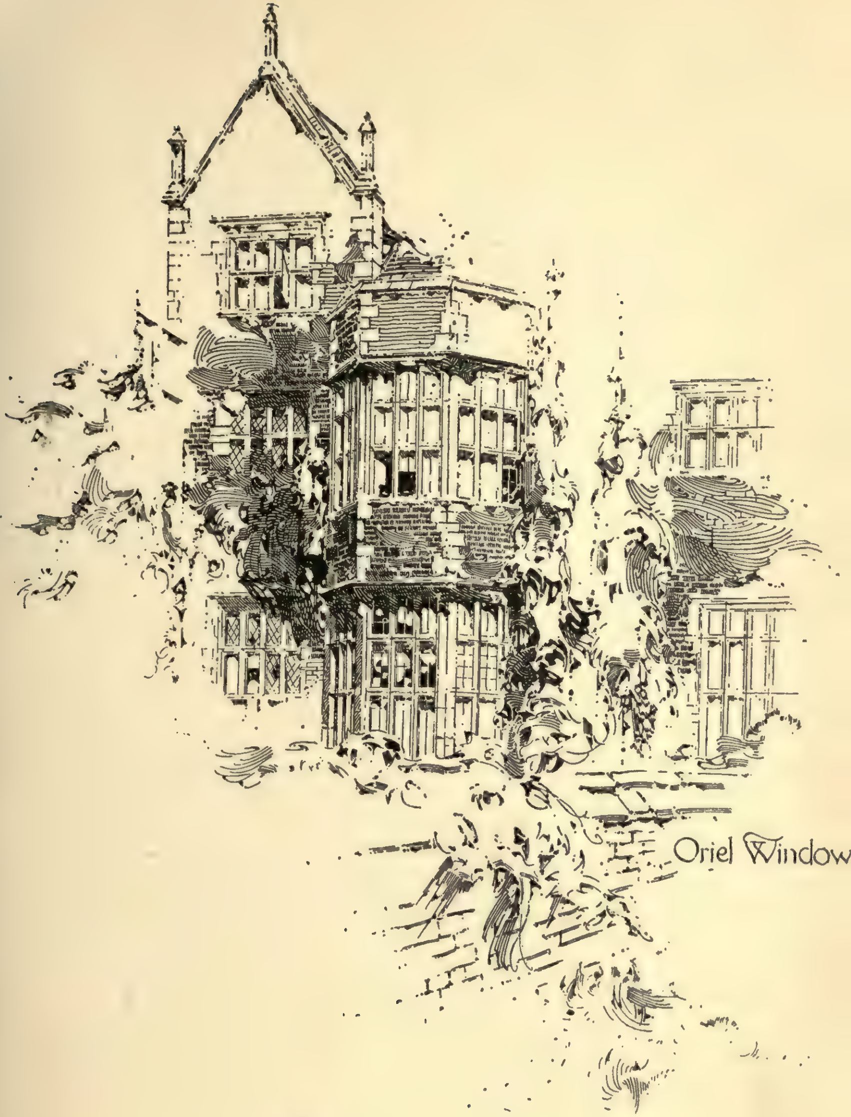
MOYN'S COURT

XIII

MOYN'S PARK

THE dairy at Moyn's Park has been pronounced by experts to be a bit of fourteenth-century work. And this view is probably correct, though the whole outward aspect of this extremely fine moated house suggests nothing but the sixteenth century, and the sixteenth century in its most perfect architectural prime. But as is the case in so many other houses of this kind, the moat (or what at Moyn's Park is left of it, and that unfortunately hardly more than a suggestion) tells its antiquarian tale; fixes the real date of the house's birth. It becomes evident, that long before Tudor architects were called upon to use their fine skill, the characteristic wide and deep ditch full of water (that lasting monument murmuring of the insecurity of days long dead) had encircled in its protective embrace a much earlier foundation. Of this original house the supposed fourteenth-century dairy is no doubt a remains. Soon after the Conqueror had carved England into a political purpose, and made those rough yet wise laws which everybody now laughs at, but which carried in them the vital truth that property has its duties as well as its rights, some people of the name of Le Moigne were settled here. The head of the house had worn harness at Hastings, but land had no sooner been granted him to build a house upon, as a reward for his services, than he set people to work upon a moat. Domestic comfort was not much cared for by householders of those days. The moat was the first thing to be thought of.

And so Moyn's Park may be included among the moated houses of England, though that moat, which should be its most salient feature, is now only represented by a fragment, spanned too, it is painful to have to say it, by an apparently modern bridge. Yet Robert le Fitzwilliam le Moigne, who lived when Piers Gaveston was ruling England (though it was popularly supposed to be ruled by King Edward the Second), would have looked, in the intervals of wine and slumber, from the narrow windows of the earlier foundation on a moat which may be confidently asserted to have completely surrounded his less decorated structure, and which was always, for simple safety's sake, bountifully brimmed with water. These were the days when the motto of "Scotland for ever" was illustrated in blood and flame on the field of Bannockburn. And it is quite likely that Robert le Fitzwilliam le Moigne had a nearer view than was conducive to health of mind and body of that realistic but disastrous picture. However, whatever was left of him after that Scottish triumph, the moat round his Essex home still remained: it was still there in its fulness when, in the reign of Henry the Seventh, the heiress of the house, Joan le Moigne, married William Gent, and when, after a due


Oriel Window

MOYN'S COURT

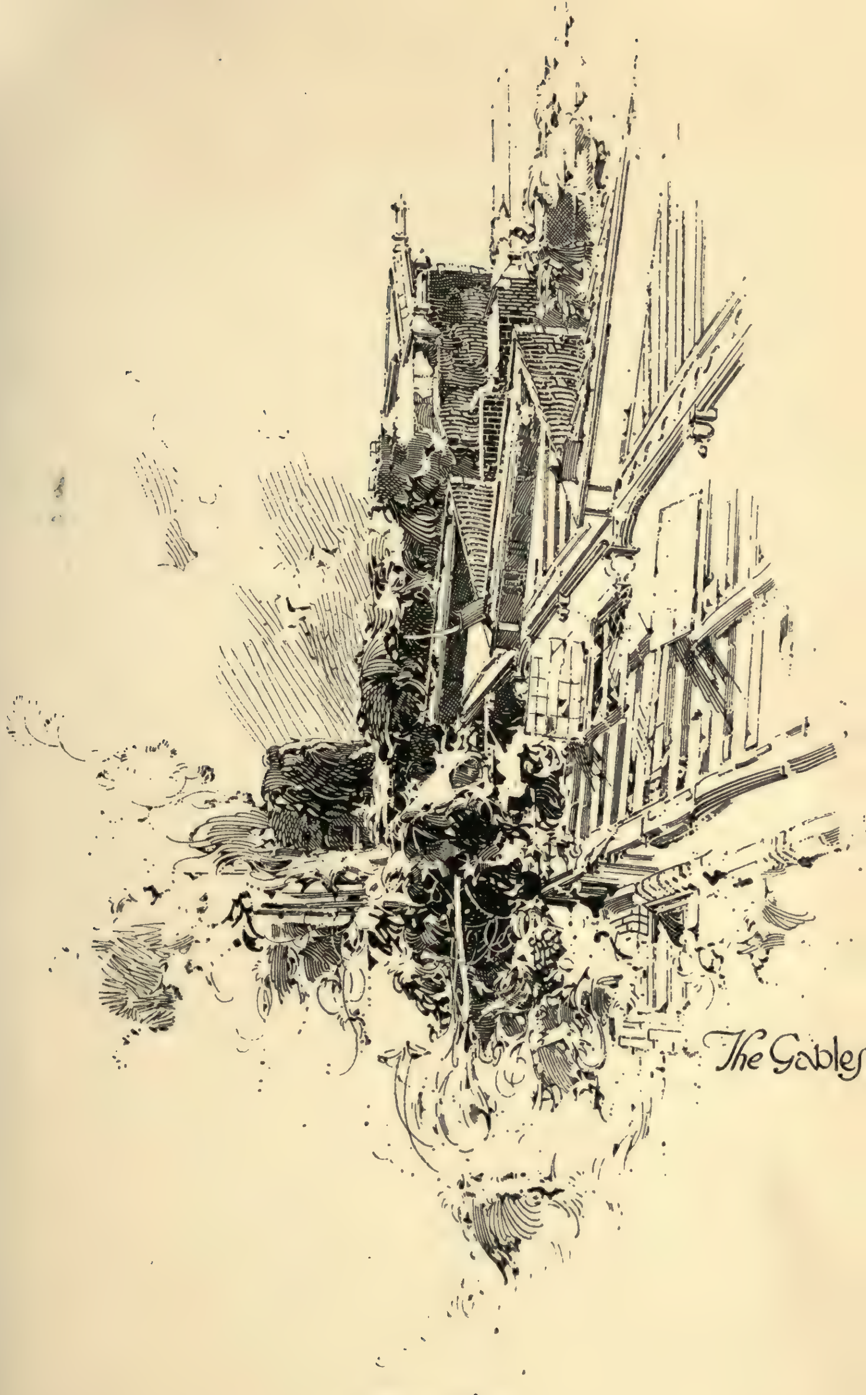
succession of birth, life, death, and marriage, Moyn's Park, as it is now called, passed, in a measure disfranchised, but still moated, to the family of the last name. Gent is referred to.

It is the vulgar abbreviation of what Oliver Cromwell used to call a fine name, and a typically English one, too,—expressly stating at the same time the necessary proviso that the proper meaning of the word "gentleman" should be thoroughly understood—to say nothing of being marked, learned, and forthwith embodied in conduct. William, of this ilk, did not do much in stirring times in the way of love or war, except to watch England in a turmoil from the safe vantage-ground of a water-girdled homestead. But Thomas Gent, who succeeded him, made amends ample; and by his addition to Moyn's of its noble west front, created at the same moment a monument of what Tudor architects were capable of doing, when the God had fallen upon them and they were given an opportunity, and furthermore imposed a floating debt of everlasting gratitude which all Englishmen who love architecture can never hope to repay. The highest expectation raised by description or illustration will not be disappointed by the first view of Moyn's Park's noble west front. It will always be viewed in a grateful silence.

It in truth grandly represents in stone the spacious days of great Elizabeth—or, to speak more correctly, in that brick-work of which lasting and essentially English material so many of these moated houses are built. Memories of some other houses of the kind are suggested when the first view is caught of

Thomas Gent's superb addition. Melford in Suffolk, to name one example, recurs at once to the memory. But the Essex house now under consideration shows a rich picturesqueness of outline which even Melford cannot surpass, and to which its richly moulded chimneys, rising in artistically clustering stacks, potently ministers. That moment of supreme invention which the French call *bien être* must have fallen upon the Elizabethan artist as he took this work in hand. The golden environments of the nation's life, under which he worked to such a fine issue, urged him, though unconsciously, forward to this splendid result. The west front of Moyn's was designed and built when England, under the imperceptible guidance of a benevolent despotism, had begun to awaken to the heart-stirring sense that she had, after a long and painful travail, been born again. The Renaissance was making its presence felt in a hundred ways. Copernicus, Galileo, Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Raleigh, and Shakespeare were not in their diverse and supreme ways greater tokens and outcomes of its inspiring influence, than that outburst of architectural enthusiasm begotten by the growth of art, brought forth by the knowledge of a national security, and resulting in the springing into existence, as if at the wave of an enchanter's wand, of those innumerable specimens of great houses all over the country, which have been rightly called the stately homes of England. Of these Moyn's Park may indisputably rank among the first.

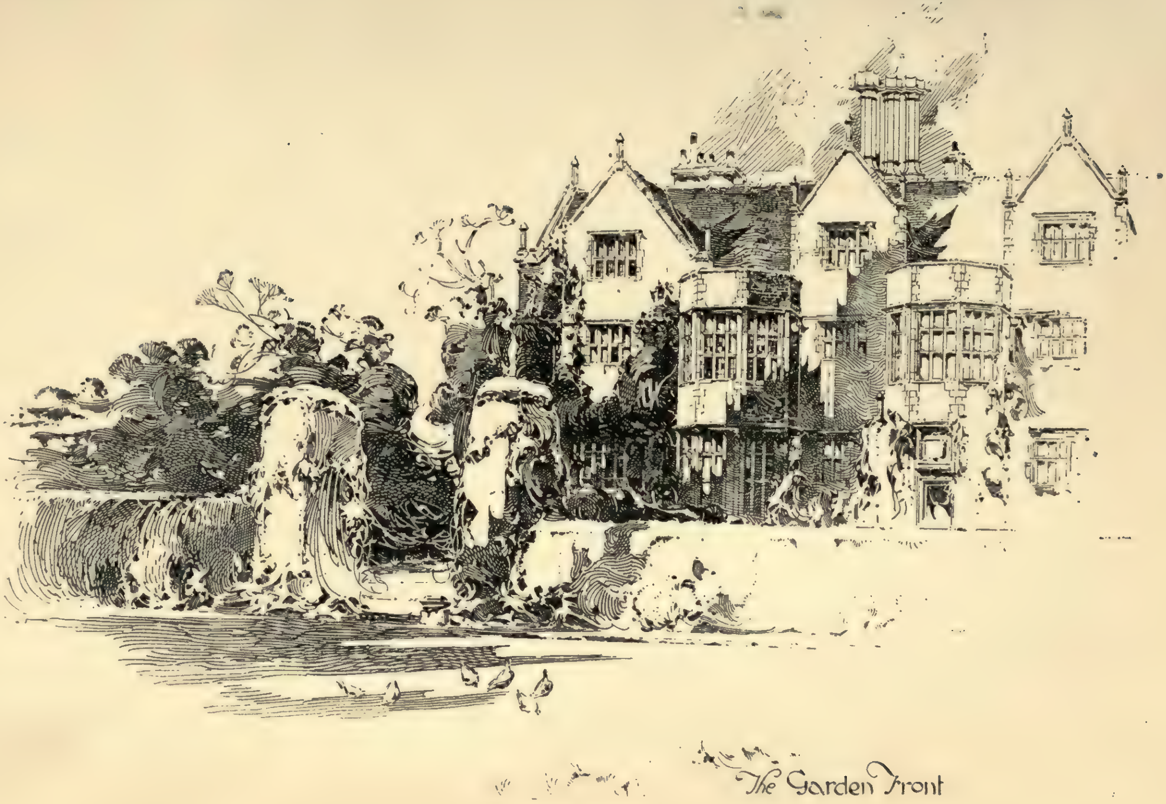
Let us consider the author of its final glories, Sir Thomas Gent, the builder of the superb west front.



MOYN'S COURT

He was the only son of William Gent by Agnes, coheiress of Thomas Carr of Great Thurlow, Suffolk. Like very many eminent men whose names are mentioned in these pages, he was educated at Cambridge, but left that University without taking the trouble to repay the labour tutors had lavished on him by taking a degree. None of the owners of these moated houses who had been sent to Oxford or Cambridge seem to have thought it necessary to fulfil this formality. Corpus Christi was the scene of Thomas Gent's studious inactivity—if indeed he studied anything at all, except the social life of the University, and its agreeable contrast with the restrained life of the Moyn's Park home. Thomas had some eminent imitators of his unstudious steps. Lord Chancellors of England have adorned the Woolsack in spite of having been "ploughed" three times for "Smalls," and the advantages or the reverse of a public school and University education are as debatable points now as they were in the days of Elizabeth. Yet the Law all the same, and what is more, eminence in it too, was the goal of young Thomas Gent's ambition, and it was a goal which, directly he left the place to which he had been sent to study, he studiously kept in view. His rise was a rapid one. He entered at the Middle Temple, and soon cast his eager eyes on his first brief. The times were fat ones for lawyers. Conspiracies were in the air, or in the immediate process of manufacture. And the year which is marked in history as the year of the Ridolfi Plot gave Thomas his first push forward on that laborious legal path which leads through dingy courts and quaint quadrangles to gout and glory. As the Italian Conspirator, or Provoking Agent, was stealing up the Duke of Norfolk's staircase at twelve o'clock at night to draw from that fatuous nobleman what he called something in writing, Thomas executed an ingenious side step, and slipped into the post of Steward of all the Courts of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. There were some pickings to be found here, it may be well understood; and it is no matter of surprise that the same year rewarded Thomas for these forensic gleanings with a seat in Parliament for Malden. From this latter point of vantage the rising lawyer listened the year after to a long string of invective, half sincere and half assumed, with which a Protestant Queen (who did not really know whether she was a Protestant or an Agnostic or a Catholic, or all three combined in an illogical confusion) greeted the news of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Sir Francis Walsingham was the English Ambassador in Paris when this dark event took place. And he was not only an eye-witness of the horrors of that tremendous night, but the remembrance of them probably did much to prompt him to that long series of underground dealings against the Catholics whose full ramifications will probably never be entirely traced, and in which the rising young lawyer of Moyn's Park was to materially assist.

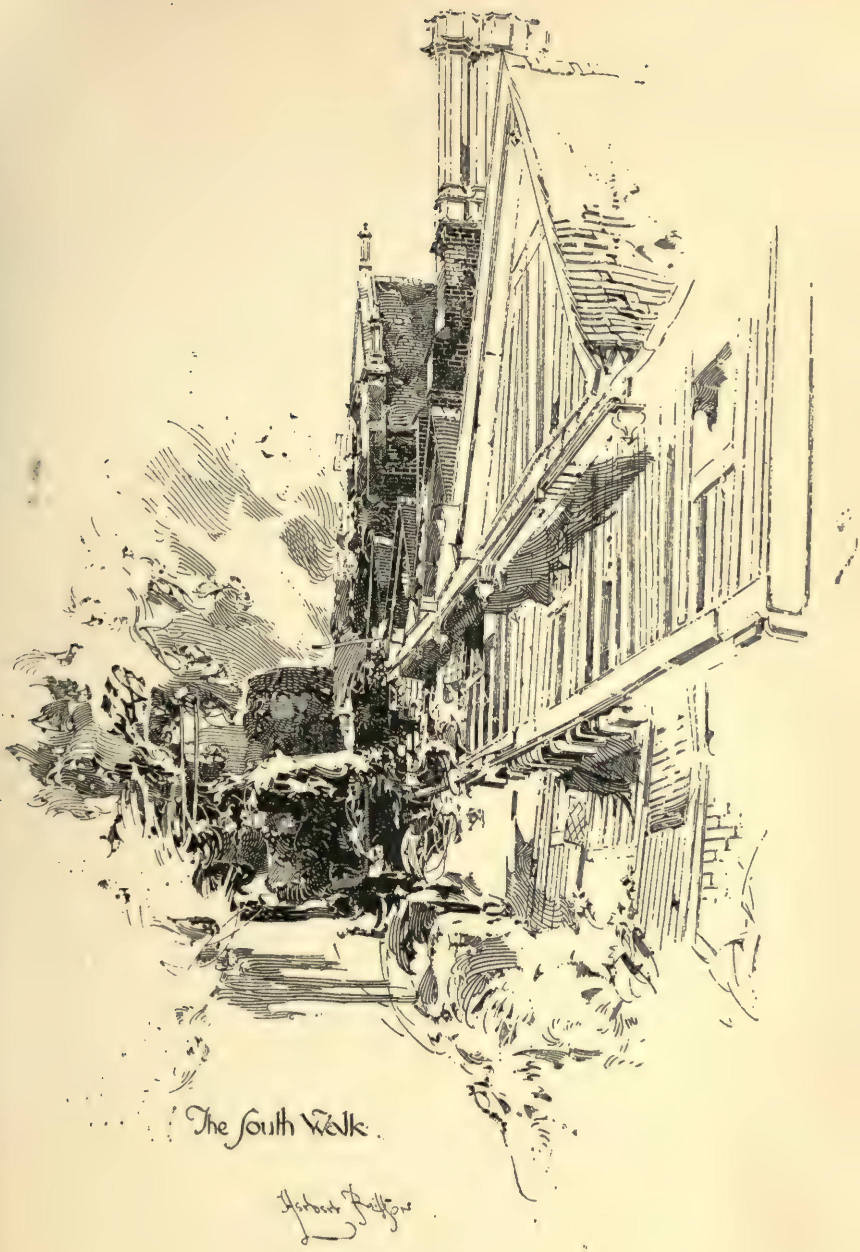
It is at this point that Thomas Gent's footsteps on the path of ambition begin to sink in doubtful ground. Walsingham had by now perfected his system of Secret Service. In his eyes every Catholic was a conspirator till he had evaded a police trap or


The Garden Front

MOYN'S COURT

offered himself as a spy. The master of Moyn's Park was one of Walsingham's right-hand men. There was dirty work to be done: it seems clear that, seeing preferment beckoning, he did it. It will be best for his own sake to skip some of Thomas Gent's legal services, through a period when, so far as Catholics were concerned, Justice lay prostrate—a period which was only ended by that national call to arms when the best Catholic blood in England was seen manning those pinnaces which, with the south-west wind and fire-ships to help them, shattered the Invincible Armada. What has been called the Jesuit Invasion by the most brilliant and inaccurate of all historians, paved the way to the Association framed to protect the Queen's life. That life was for the most part threatened by enthusiasts who needed medical treatment, or by moonstruck boys in want of the birch-rod. But Thomas Gent had a hand in the framing of this protective measure, and it paved the way to his elevation to the dignity of a Serjeant-at-Law. A two years' constant attention to the secret directions of the same subdolous master (Walsingham is meant), resulted in Thomas Gent finding himself a Baron of the Exchequer. It also saw him sitting in judgment on the Babington Conspirators. His inquisitorial if not judicial eye now had the opportunity of resting on a batch of as certain victims to the art of the Provoking Agent as can be found at random in the whole record of English history. Sir Thomas Gent said nothing on this historic occasion. Either he had a bad cold and was not heard by the Elizabethan reporters, or a previous and private knowledge of that preposterous affair suggested a discreet silence. He had been active enough in the matter before it came to a head, or he would not have been seated where he was sitting; nor the year after, would a special exemption have been made in his favour of 33 Hen. VIII c. 24. Why should a statute which properly forbade a Judge from acting as a Justice of Assize in his own county, have been repealed expressly for the benefit of this newly made Baron of the Exchequer? What faithful services in a dubious cause brought this strange exemption following fast in the wake of judicial honours? I fear that some dirty work had to be done in Essex which needed a callous conscience and a well-filled purse. I think we had better turn from Sir Thomas Gent's life, which ended at Moyn's Park in January 1593, and once more fall to admiration of his building.

And of his gardens! These are especially beautiful. Even in these days of innovation every decoration in them seems new, and yet dates back to the age of Elizabeth. The flat site of Moyn's Park—for the estate with its park of 200 acres lies on a perfect level—gave ample opportunity for the landscape gardeners of those days,—who did not rely for their effects on grass slopes artificially produced. Hence at Moyn's the beauty of a garden laid out on a perfect level, is to be seen to perfection. Pleasaunce is the more fitting name for the place. Ample spaces of trim lawn spread themselves evenly. Immemorial yews cast a shade at properly calculated distances, to give the saunterer an idea of what the flight of time means; and they are yews all cut into quaint and


The South Walk
Herbert Railton

MOYN'S COURT

antique shapes. No such pollution as a gravel walk desecrates this old-world refuge from the cares of life. Grass paths are properly the only paths fit for a connoisseur in gardens to walk upon, and grass paths, be it well understood, planted according to the prescription of Lord Bacon. Sweet-smelling herbs reward every foot-pressure with fragrance. An admirable bowling-green, most carefully kept, completes the harmonious picture; and suggests the advantages of a revival of an old-world game of leisurely skill, if only to divert the hot-headed rising generation from throwing bowls at any institution whose overthrow they fatuously think might be a medium for making money.

No suggestion, however, of the imminent revolution or of the Socialist Kingdom of Saints, has touched Moyn's Park as yet. Both the old house and its quiet and beautiful surroundings reflect the golden age when England was merry under the wisely guiding hand of a practically paternal Government. They represent the spirit both of Elizabethan order and of Elizabethan ornament. And as a paramount, and it is to be hoped an indestructible monument of those times, the noble west front towers.

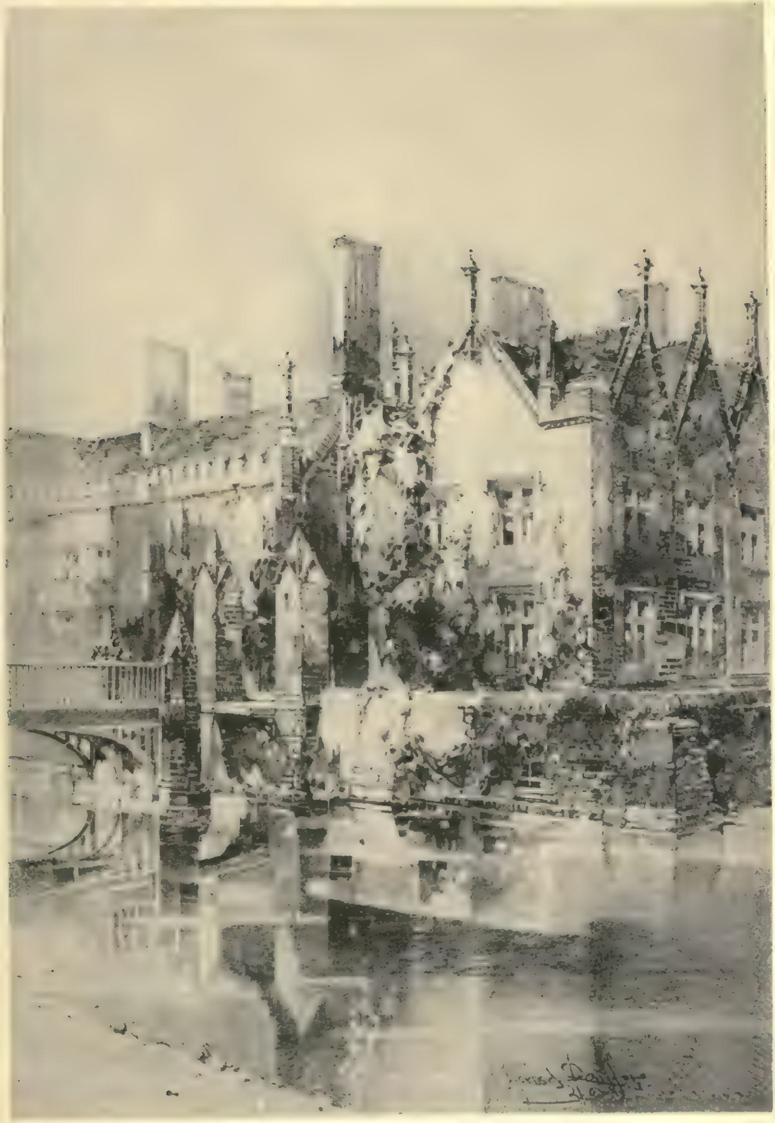
XIV

HELMINGHAM HALL

1514

THE two drawbridges at Helmingham are raised every night, and local rumour alleges that they have been put to this use for which drawbridges were intended, every night since the times of William the Conqueror. This, however, must be considered a chronological attempt to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel, or, to apply the parallel more locally, to fix the age of a house from the doubtful date of the moat which surrounds it. The moat, however, is no doubt the principal feature of Helmingham. It is broad, brimming, spanned by two stone bridges of two arches each, each bridge ending on the side nearest the house in a wooden structure which can be raised or lowered. But the house itself, formerly of red brick, but now covered with stucco, which the moat washes on four sides, comprises no portion of architecture of an earlier period than the reign of Henry the Eighth.

It is perhaps from the disappointment of seeing the only two workable drawbridges in England attached to a moated house of so comparatively speaking



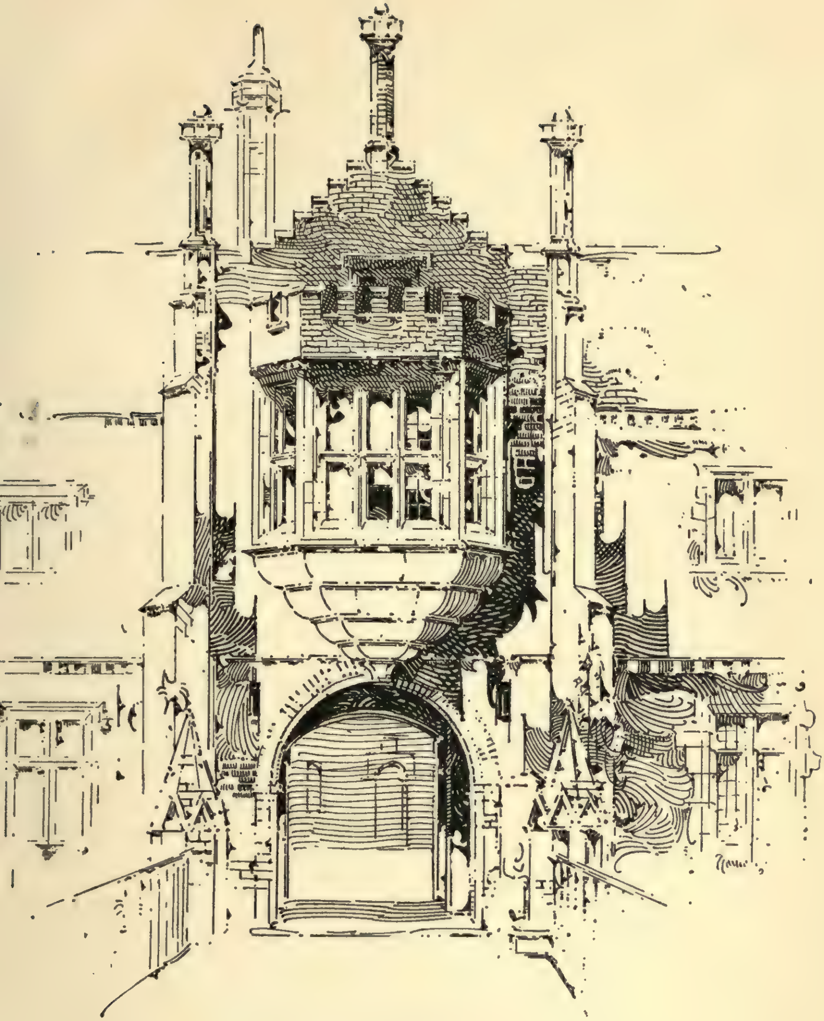
HELMINGHAM HALL

recent a date, as well as from a certain meretricious effect lent by the application of stucco to red brick, that the feeling inspired by the first sight of Helmingham is one of disillusionment. It looks so bran new. Everything about it (from the white mullions of the windows, to the glistening gables which seem to have enjoyed a recent application of Monkey Brand soap) is so spic and span and stainless, that an uncomfortable feeling suggests itself to the spectator, that he is viewing an elaborate imitation of an English moated house, with the moat full of real water, and two drawbridges guaranteed workable, made in America, and shipped from some World's Fair in Chicago. Every detail of a representation meant to be complete is almost obtrusively conspicuous ; from a shine about the house itself, which almost looks like veneer, to the great flocks of wild-fowl which swim about the moat with a confident security so unnatural that they will take food from a stranger's hand. The oldest-looking things about the place indeed are the oaks in the park. These comprise some of the finest specimens of our national tree in Suffolk. Yet these thrive in broad acres to which an artificial touch is given by the presence of certain red deer, who ought never to be seen so near a dwelling of man. They too, by their unnatural calm at the approach of a stranger, look as if they had been tamed for show purposes. And so, in spite of Henry the Eighth, the long occupation by distinguished owners, a moat full of water, two drawbridges nightly in use, and other accessaries which should inspire archæological delight, Helmingham as a moated house fails to stir the fancy. A modern touch seems everywhere to make itself felt.

It seems in keeping, therefore, after this preamble, and a natural deduction from it, that an episode of modern times should be responsible for the most interesting page in the history of a house which was built when Henry the Eighth ruled England : that is to say, if the term Modern Times may be applied, in these headlong days, to those Georgian days when people did not go so fast ahead as they do now,—though Louis the Sixteenth lost his ; and Edmund Burke, by his frenzied letters on "A Regicide Peace," was supposed by political opponents to have brought himself (mentally speaking, in this case) to a similar condition. We are far enough here from Bluff King Hal's merry England, and from the days when moats were essential features in architects' plans of gentlemen's country seats. We breathe the atmosphere of a different kind of French War than that which earlier inhabitants of Helmingham and other moated houses of the period waged in Tudor armour and accoutrements on that field of Guinegatte, better known as the Battle of the Spurs. We have left the year 1513 far behind us, and with it the military uniform now worn by the Yeomen of the Guard. The inevitable French War is still in progress : but bagwigs are seen in the enemies' trenches, instead of crested helmets ; and imminent deadly breaches are mounted by smooth-faced gallants in full-bottomed coats. And so, in spite of the fine collection of armour in the great hall with its suggestion of mediæval strife, the military story of Helmingham is as recent as is the look of the house from which it flows. We have left the Middle Ages far behind us, and have arrived at the days of Georges and Puddings; of a London lighted by torches; of drowsy watchmen bawling the hour; of chairmen staggering under the weight of sedan chairs.

But there is compensation in everything, even in the matter of country houses. And so, though the aspect of Helmingham Hall conveys the impression of a skilfully made modern model of an old house, and though its most interesting story is dated in the days when Edmund Burke, that greatest of all orators, was telling Europe that the age of chivalry was dead, and that the age of sophisters and economists and calculators had succeeded it (What of our Labour Party and our Social Democratic Federation?), the story itself, with its sombre suggestion of a Nemesis brooding over a fated house, takes on a classic tinge: seems, in spite of its modern dress and over-refined and artificial environments, to be charged to the full with the very spirit of the Antique.

The story of Helmingham, then, or rather, that striking episode closing a long series of commonplace chapters, consists in the fulfilment of a family prophecy. Its origin, like that of all such provincial imprecations not taken down in the shorthand of the day, is obscure. But it was probably uttered by one of those miserable old women who were called witches in those luminous days when tar-barrels still blazed on hilltops, ducking-stools were in constant demand, and James the First reeled nightly on his throne. It is probable that the combined effects of a constant persecution, a perpetual boycott, the application of red-hot pincers, an unsatiable thirst for revenge, and a certain magnetism, which is now for the first time beginning to be understood, had ended by endowing these poor women with a power approaching the hypnotic. No other explanation will account for the influence these unfortunate people must in certain moments have had, unless every judge on the English Bench is to be labelled as a barbarian, and the inhabitants of whole counties, perjurers from their mothers' wombs. Matthew Hale, the Lord-Chief-Justice, was not an estimable, nor for that matter was the author of the *Novum Organum.* But neither of them can be labelled fools, and both believed in witches. With this key to the mystery in hand, what happened in English villages every day and was accounted supernatural, is easily explained. Edmund Kean's glance in *Macbeth* once turned one of his audience faint in a crowded theatre. Six years afterwards the same glance turned the same spectator faint in a London tavern. But the victim of that baleful look had not the faintest idea that the man who was looking at him was Edmund Kean. Call it the hypnotic glance, or, as the Italians do, the "evil eye," this is the faculty which brought many a poor old woman to the faggot and tar-barrel on many an English common or village green. Miss or Madam from the Hall came riding by. The reputation of some poverty-stricken wretch was known at the Hall, and had been discussed there. At sight of the bent and crouching subject of those after-dinner diatribes, Miss or Madam avert a frightened or disdainful head, but



Oriel Window
in Gatehouse

HELMINGHAM HALL

not before a glance flaming with hatred and magnetism has struck them. Miss or Madam turn sick. They ride back to the Hall, and mope and pine, perhaps become hypochondriacs. But the nervous system was not understood in those days, and the family doctor delivers this as a diagnosis: "They have been overlooked." All hands at once manned the tar-barrel.

That people are to be found in most English countrysides who still possess the power, which in ignorance and superstition was called witchcraft in days gone by, will not be denied by anyone who has taken the trouble to be inquisitive in the matter; who has had the opportunity of travel in out-of-the-way parts of the country; and has remembered or written down in a diary what he has seen. Nor are names carrying undeniable authority wanting to support this view of a strange case. Curiosity in the matter impelled the great Balzac, staggering on to his goal as he was, under the ever accumulating burden of his *Comédie Humaine*, to pause from that giant's labour, and, after consulting every authority on an obscure subject, to commit himself to a prolonged tour of investigation, which ended in his finding what our ancestors called witchcraft, or the people who in those days would have been accused of practising it, flourishing and rampant in every department of France. The genius that forecast the discoveries of Cuvier, defined what he had seen as magnetism, but as a personal form of it which, almost as a necessity confined to poorly-fed and ignorant people, who from the very conditions of their surroundings, and their total inability to read, write, or exhaust their will power in any other way, concentrated it with an energy which produced surprising results, on thought reading, palmistry, prophecies, and attendant mysteries which savants of James the First and earlier days classed under Demonology.

It was in all likelihood the result of one of these nervous paroxysms of an old woman who had been badly treated, which affected, or is supposed to have fatally affected, the fortunes of the Tollemaches. The look with which the curse was accompanied may have had some such directly physical effect on the recipient as has been already described. He made for Helmingham Hall at all events as fast as his horse's legs could carry him, and said nothing whatever about the salutation he had just received on a country road, and which had banned his house to the sixth generation. What was said by the wayside prophetess is not exactly known, nor the precise period of history at which she uttered her curse. The early part of the reign of Charles the Second is, however, supposed to be the date of a denunciation which has been reduced, in the process of handing down from one generation of village gossips to another, to this final form: "The House of Tollemache will always be unfortunate." Had this really represented the full scope of the curse, "Bad luck to you" would in all probability have served the witch's purpose without any further waste of tissue or words. But that something more than this immemorial formula bringing on disaster was ventured on the occasion, was proved by the fact of the family's singular abstention from the military or naval service for a considerable lapse of years. Disposition or design may have dictated this course; but it was only dropped after a lapse of time which seemed to promise immunity from further peril. The Tollemaches remained undistinguished, and they remained also unharmed. Soldier and sailor served their country without attaining to any special glory, or coming to any noticeable grief. The curse was such a long time falling that it was supposed at last to have fallen, and missed its mark.

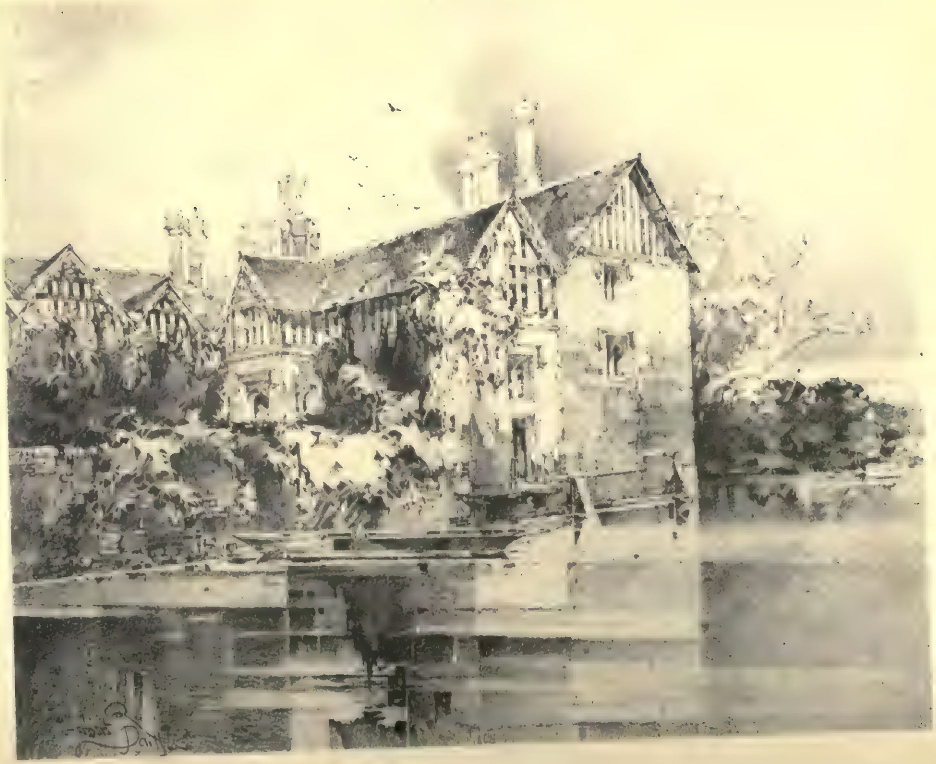
Nemesis, however, we are told, arrives though she walks with lame feet. This village malediction, though it was much behind time, came at last. It came in the days when the First Congress in America and the skirmish at Concord paved the way to the war between England and her Colonies and the battle of Bunker's Hill. In that year fruitful with disgrace to English statesmanship, a son and heir was born to Helmingham Hall, who from his very earliest years gave the utmost promise of future distinction. He was born on the 10th day of November 1774. He was the son of the Honourable Captain John Tollemache of the Royal Navy, and Lady Bridges Henley, daughter of the Earl of Northington, and he was named Lionel Robert. The disinclination of the Tollemaches to military or naval service, engendered it is supposed by some fell suggestion in the witch's prophecy, in time passed away. This fact is evidenced by the profession of the boy's father, to say nothing of the fact that two of his uncles, by name respectively William and George, were, at the time of his birth, also serving their country under the White Ensign. The growth of young Lionel Tollemache to man's estate was marked by a proficiency in every study and pursuit which he embraced, and to this proficiency was joined a charm and a distinction of manner which made him a county idol for miles round. He seems indeed to have attained to that sort of universal respect and popularity which had been gained by the eldest son of James the First, before that career promising so brilliantly was so suddenly cut off under circumstances which still reek of suspicion. With youth at the prow, and assiduity instead of pleasure at the helm, all promised well for Lionel Tollemache through life, when he surprised his friends and relations by the announcement that he was going to serve his King and country on shore. The Tollemaches had mostly inclined to the sea service, and the father and two uncles had already distinguished themselves in it. It was at this very moment when the son and heir of the house had announced his intention of becoming a soldier that disaster approached Helmingham Hall with hurrying feet, and the family curse spoken so many years ago that it had come to be forgotten, worked to a relentless fulfilment.

With the kindly intention of encouraging a nervous young midshipman, the Honourable Captain George Talbot, one of the young Lionel's uncles, went up to the masthead of the *Modeste* man-of-war, as Nelson was to do in after days, and for the same kindly purpose. The sea was as smooth as a mill-pond. Novice and captain made the ascent in safety, and the captain was in the very act of telling his midshipman that he had now proved by practical demonstration the utter absence of danger in the feat, when a fit or some sudden attack of dizziness seized him, and he fell from the mizzen-top on to the deck below and died in a minute. This was the first stroke of the family fate.

The second followed with a swiftness equally without remorse. The fact of England's being at the moment at war with her Colonies, may perhaps permit it to be said that Lionel's father perished in the service of his country, since his antagonist in a fatal duel in New York was what was then called one of the American rebels. Words were exchanged over wine at a chance meeting: politics pushed aside tavern talk: swords were drawn, and a thrust in segoon proved instantly fatal to the Honourable John Tollemache, who had not crossed swords with his opponent for more than two minutes before he lay dead upon the floor. The tide of the house's calamity now seemed to be at full; but its fatal blow had not reached the mark appointed yet. It took the immediately successive form of a hurricane in the Atlantic of such tremendous force as to whip the masts out of His Majesty's frigate *Repulse*, and send her to the bottom with every soul on board, including the Honourable William Tollemache, the young heir of Helmingham's sole surviving uncle.

These three successive blows of Fate left young Lionel Robert the last male representative of his race, and they found him at the same time about to enter the Army. He obtained an ensign's commission in the first regiment of foot-guards in 1791, undeterred by the ominous working out of the family curse upon his house, but, as after events showed, not unmindful of it. Omens of the evil coming on assailed him from his first entrance into the Army. But his constant and ominous remark that a soldier's fate was "to be one night in the paraphernalia of dress, and the next in a winding sheet," neither kept him from a diligent and scientific devotion to the profession in which it was prophesied on all sides that he would excel, or from the affection and devotion of his brother-officers and the whole of the rank and file. He entered the Army in stirring times, filled with the cries of revolution, and big with the prospects of war. Two years after he had joined the colours, the knife of the guillotine fell on the neck of Louis the Sixteenth. The invectives of Burke at last roused England to her danger. And amidst a panic in which the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and bareheaded citizens rushed about London streets drinking gin out of tumblers and bawling out that the world was at an end, the first regiment of foot-guards sailed for Flanders, and Ensign Lionel Robert Tollemache with it.

The military capacity of the English commander was not an excessive proportion—nor was the siege of Valenciennes a military undertaking which has left its mark on the annals of strategy. Some ill-designed trenches were opened round the town, and their completion was celebrated by a casual and ill-directed cannonade. The fire of the garrison was equally faulty in aim. During the whole month of July 1794 only a very few casualties occurred in the English lines. But amongst them one officer was returned as killed, and only one. His death was due to the bursting of a chance bomb fired by a desultory garrison for practice more than for anything else. The officer's name was Ensign Lionel Robert Tollemache.



BADDESLEY CLINTON

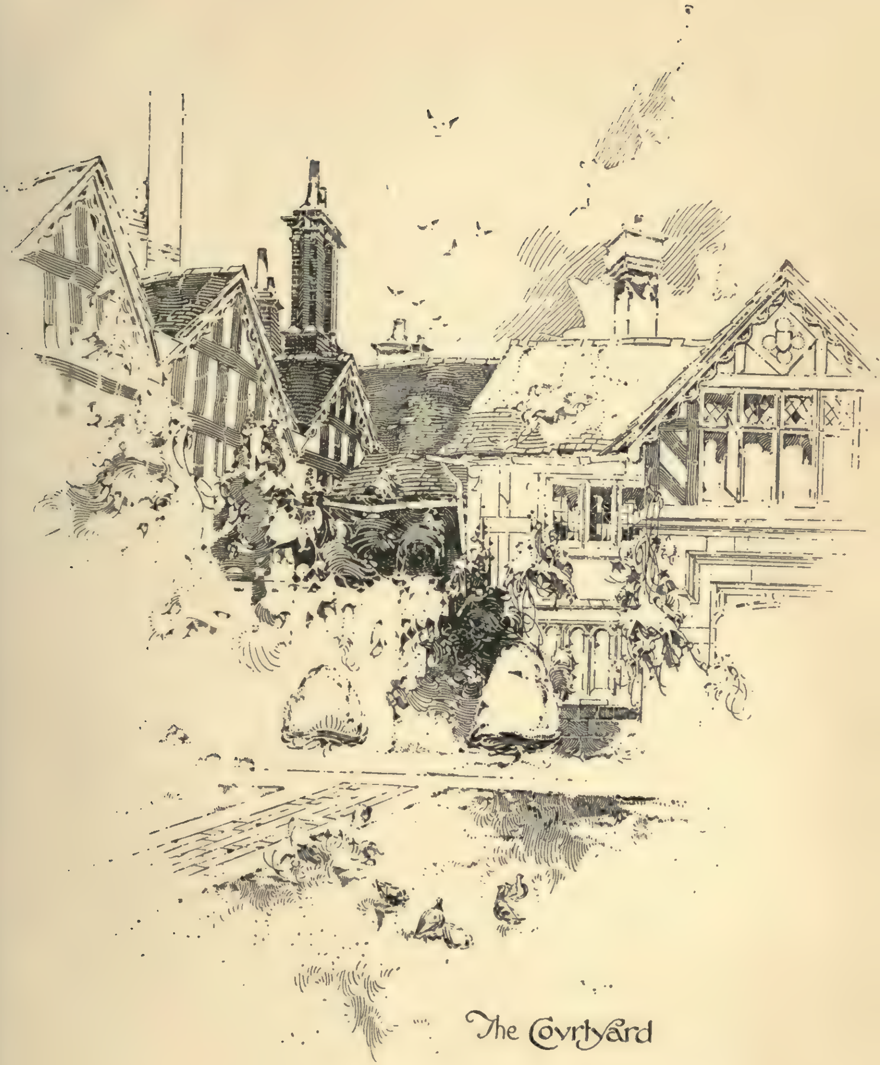
XV

BADDESLEY CLINTON

A SECLUDED and richly wooded park, a beautiful domestic chapel within the walls, a Catholic church dedicated to St. Francis on the park's verge, and a convent of Poor Clares with a village school attached, help to give Baddesley Clinton something of a cloistral air. Its fame of being one of the oldest and most picturesque manor-houses in Warwickshire is enhanced by the fact that as far back as the days of Richard the Second a family of the name of Shakespeare held lands here, and were in all probability early ancestors of the poet. The touch of a literary flavour thus early given to the surroundings was strengthened in after times by the long residence in the house of a celebrated man of letters. His name was Henry Ferrers, and he was a well-known antiquary. He was often visited at Baddesley Clinton by his bosom friends Camden and Sir William Dugdale, who were antiquaries too ; and a fitting air of cloistral seclusion and quiet invests the scene of those literary discussions waged in a spirit of friendly rivalry three hundred years ago. The grey sandstone of which the house is built lends a touch of quiet colour to the green landscape.

The Elizabethan brick chimneys mark the date of this literary occupation. The broad and brimming moat shielded these savants at play, and barred the approach of the illiterate. All these factors give colour to the fancy. The house seems to meditate.

The moat, which is in a perfect state of preservation, has encircled (as is almost invariably the case) earlier buildings than those now standing, and was probably an ingenious contrivance of Norman days. The de Biseges were Lords of Baddesley in those stirring times when men rode abroad not to redress human wrongs but to put loot into their pockets, and martial owners with such a suggestive name would take care that their family seat was not in a condition to be carried by a sudden assault. Their moat, however, remains their sole monument as builders. For the earliest date that can be assigned to the oldest remaining parts of the house is the middle of the fifteenth century. The de Clintons of Colehill were responsible for the picturesque beauties of the place as now seen. Their architects worked for them during the sounding times of the French War, and successfully impressed their iron personalities on Baddesley while Henry the Sixth or his marshals were vainly trying to impress their less iron personalities on France. Three years after Joan of Arc had met a martyr-patriot's doom on the great pile raised in the market-place of Rouen, the manor and the new house passed from the de Clintons into the hands of one Nicholas Metley. Nothing much is known about this new owner, but it would seem that he had done

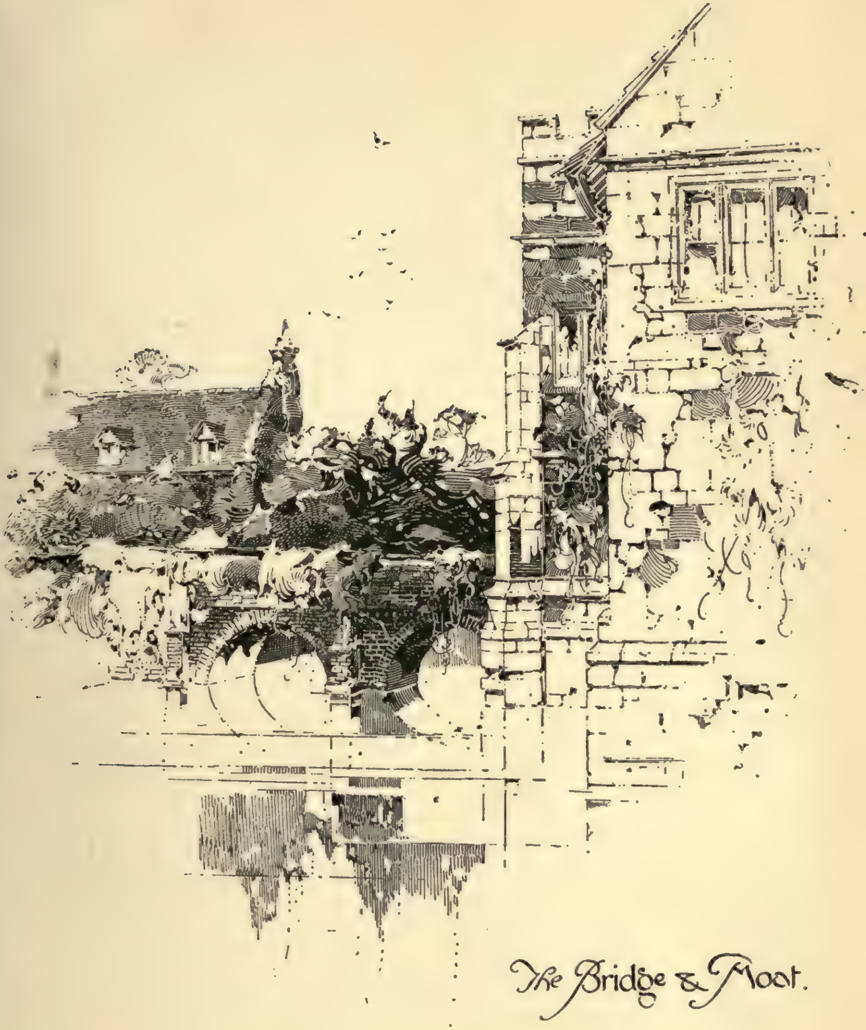

The Courtyard

BADDESLEY CLINTON

something at some time of his life which he had better not have done, and at the same time had left unaccomplished duties which called loudly for performance. Whether he had evaded service in the French Wars, or had returned from them after perpetrating some unusual act of barbarity or sacrilege; whether he had become by a deft stroke of the pen unlawfully possessed of the house in which he died, or had some unusually dark mediæval family secret locked up in his heart or his money-chest, can never be definitely known. One thing, however, is certain. When Nicholas Metley saw the end approaching, he thought fit to take out some sort of an insurance against a possibly subsequent event. He disposed of the property for the good of his soul.

Twenty-three years after this an addition was made to the house which still repays the study of the antiquary, and typically suggests the insecurity of the times. This addition, or renovation rather, took the form of the new outer oak door, with its massive hinges and wicket, which, taken into account with the deep moat immediately adjacent, gives modern visitors a lively sense of the insecurity of their Catholic forefathers in the days when England was already beginning to be deluged with the blood of the Wars of the Roses, when Bloreheath led to the temporary disbanding of the Yorkist army, and Margaret of Anjou with cuisses on her thigh, gallantly armed, fled to Scotland through the long August nights following her decisive defeat at Northampton. Antiquaries offer reasons for concluding that the date of this door's erection at Baddesley is contemporaneous with the date of this battle. And they can deal, if they are to be believed, in detail on the points which give rise to the belief. Less practised observers will amuse themselves by conjuring up visions of those departed worthies, who, looking abroad at a troubled England, saw even darker days coming for their own family circle, and thought it high time to put a heavier door on their country house. The Earls of York and Lancaster were entering London amidst the shouts of the people as the local blacksmith's hammers rang stridently on these massive hinges. That labour of defence had need to be hurried. All England was rising in an insurrectionary turmoil as those greasy London citizens were throwing up their caps.

The Wars of the Roses had become but an uncomfortable memory of the past (except to those who had lost their arms or legs in them), when a doyenne appears upon the scene at Baddesley. Her name was Constance Brome, and by her marriage to Sir Edward Ferrers she carried this fine property to that direct descendant of the formidable Lords of Groby in whose family it remains to the present day. At the same time that Sir Edward Ferrers discovered that he loved Constance Brome (to say nothing of the beauties of her ancestral home, and the suggestive massiveness of her iron-clasped money-chests), the Cornish Revolt was in full progress. Perkin Warbeck was being discovered not to be the Duke of York after losing his courage at Taunton; and Sebastian Cabot was busily engaged in discovering New-

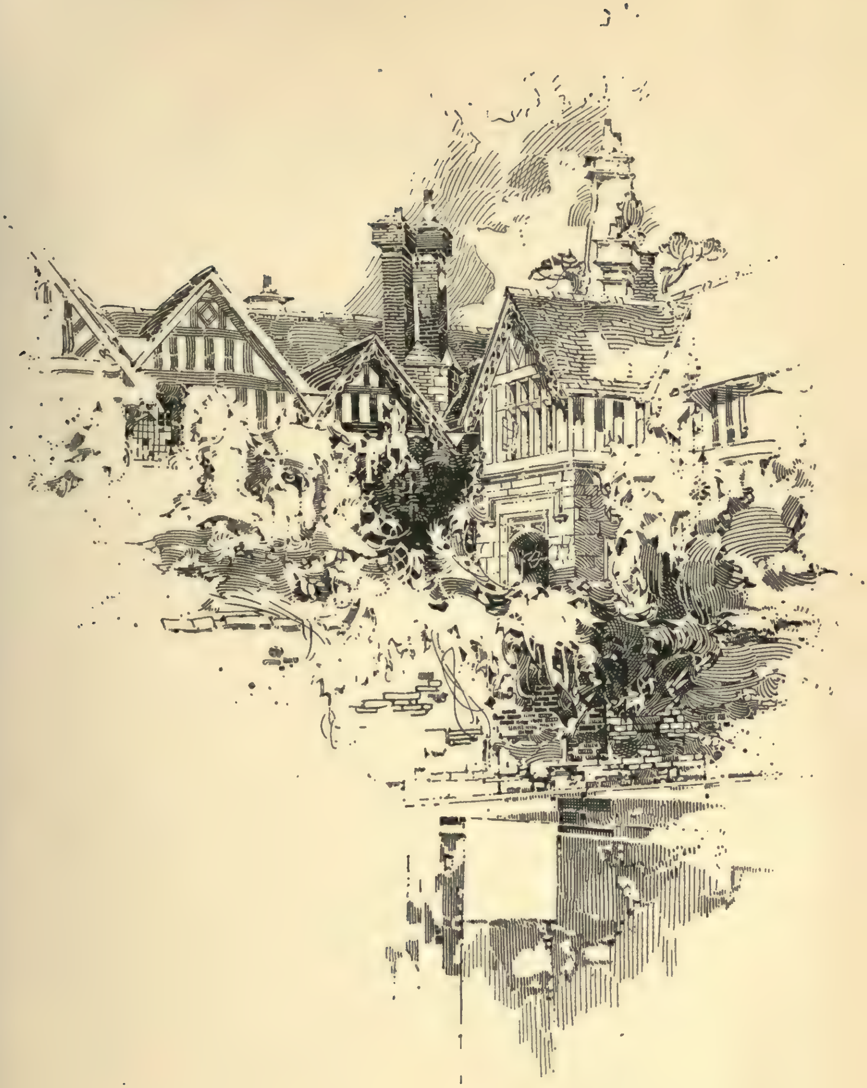

The Bridge & Moat.

BADDESLEY CLINTON

foundland. The news of the successful venture of this Genoese seaman, who was born and bred in England and who had chosen Bristol for his point of departure, would have taken a long time to reach the seclusion of Baddesley Clinton. The rumour of great events travelled slowly in those days, in spite of the pedestrian efforts of the late King Richard the Third's specially appointed post. The young bride and bridegroom would have listened to the news of Cabot's discoveries with composure, when after a due interval of months that news had come to their hands. They would not have realized where Newfoundland was, Johnston's Atlas not being in circulation in those far-off days. Nor would they have appreciated the prospects opened up by Cabot's inquisitiveness and daring to an enormous sea fishery. What had these good Catholics to do with sea fisheries? Had not Baddesley Clinton its fish ponds!

Between the years 1549 and 1633 a fuller stream of story flowed through the old house, and fell on ears that could hear, and transmit what they heard to brains able to appreciate it. This period indeed marked the lifetime of Henry Ferrers, the antiquary, whose literary tenure of Baddesley has already been noticed. His life began, therefore, at the Protectorate of Somerset, and closed full of honour and dignity in the year in which Laud, fuller than ever of dreams and visions, and frightened out of his life at the sight of knives crossed, and the fall of plates, succeeded to the See of Canterbury, and Milton gave the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso* to a courtly and appreciative world. In these strenuous times of ours in which everybody seems to be trying to do nothing in particular as fast as they are able, with a sublime self-confidence that blind efforts will result in permanent good, it is pleasant to think of this long life led by Henry Ferrers, and devoted to research and letters in surroundings so perfectly adapted to the purpose. The thankless Muse could nowhere be more strictly meditated than beneath the towers of Baddesley. More than a passing reference seems called for to the owner, and to his works and work.

He was born at the beautiful house which he was destined to inherit on the 26th of January 1549. His father's name was Edward; his mother's name was Bridget; and at the time of his birth Somerset's protectorate was drawing to its close amidst scenes of treachery and blood. Religious revolt and agrarian discontent stalked England hand in hand. Cornishmen called the new Church Service a Christmas game. Devonshire took up staves and cudgels for the restoration of the Mass. Near Norwich twenty thousand reformers gathered round a Reformation tree, roared for cheap bread, the abolition of enclosures, and the right of every man to lie on his back and do nothing, and fought hand to hand with a paralysed military. Scenes so little in harmony with an antiquary's birth were changed to serener surroundings when Henry Ferrers, after a short probation at Oxford, which was not (as is so often the case in men destined afterwards to distinction) crowned with a degree, came back to the home of his ancestors and settled down to the long and learned leisure of a



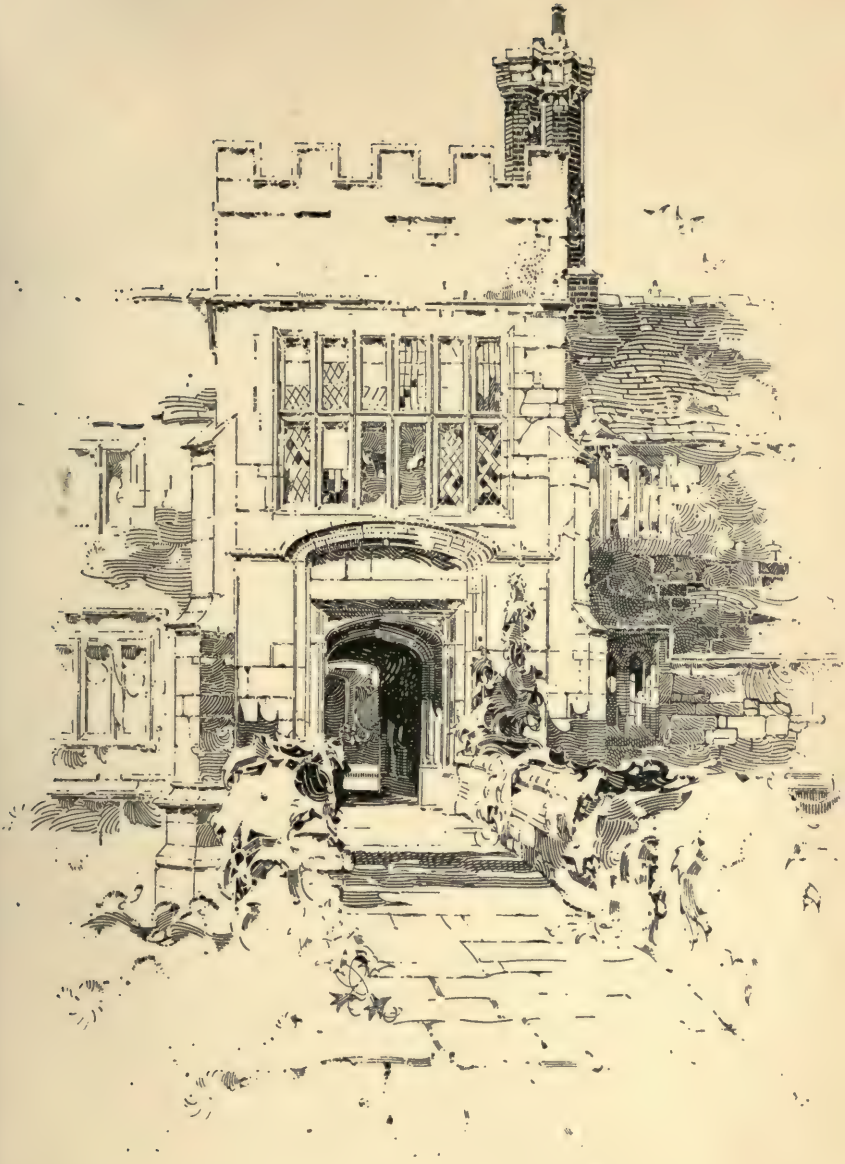
Gables and Moat

BADDESLEY CLINTON

cultured life. Heraldry, genealogy, and antiquities were his especial hobbies. But he cultivated the Muses too in his sedate way, and verses inspired by wide culture and the pensive beauties of his Warwickshire home appeared in many of the leaflets exposed for sale on the bookstalls of Elizabeth's London. He was, however, less perhaps an author than an untiring collector of material. He meditated works innumerable, and left others to write them; and a Perambulation of Warwickshire, one of his most cherished designs, after a prolonged and anxiously watched labour, never came to literary birth. Ferrers' industry as a collector of material, however, never slackened. His was an untiring pen, plunged continually into incontinent ink. And he had not been long at Baddesley before the library shelves began to groan under the innumerable manuscripts which now enrich the College of Arms, the Sheldonian Library, and the Ashmolean Museum.

Long, however, before these literary treasures had reached their final havens, they had been placed at the disposition of two of Henry Ferrers' intimate friends. They were both historians and antiquaries like himself; but unlike himself, they believed in writing books instead of only collecting material for them. The works of Camden must always find a place in the nation's library. Their value may be considered to be largely due to long researches among the Baddesley Manuscripts, and to literary discussions with their learned owner prolonged far into the night. Camden was a frequent visitor at this Warwickshire moated house. He was two years younger than Henry Ferrers, and predeceased him by ten years. The historian so noted for his happy temper and gentle disposition must always have been found a congenial guest. One can picture this man of middle height, and active movements, and pleasant ruddy face, poring over the treasures of the Baddesley library, looking up eagerly to ask some question of his cultured host, who had been silently watching him: hear the genial laugh of the great chronicler of Elizabeth's age, as he and Henry Ferrers sit over the wine! The fine oak dining-table of the fifteenth century has nobly ministered no doubt to the zeal of these consulting historians. The afternoon sun streams through stained-glass windows richly emblazoned with the family arms.

Another future historian and antiquary may have listened to one of these conferences in the library or the dining-hall of Baddesley, though Camden would only have seen him as an ambitious and precocious boy. Camden died in 1623. The year before this a young gentleman named William Dugdale showed his precocity in other ways than literature, by marrying at the age of seventeen to oblige a whimsical father, and by buying a neighbouring estate—obviously, as he was a minor, with his wife's money. Heraldry in its highest forms was the special hobby of this new addition to the literary circle over which Henry Ferrers mildly presided, and the novice soon turned his knowledge of the subject to a practical account. The new squire of Blythe Hall near Coleshill, was in



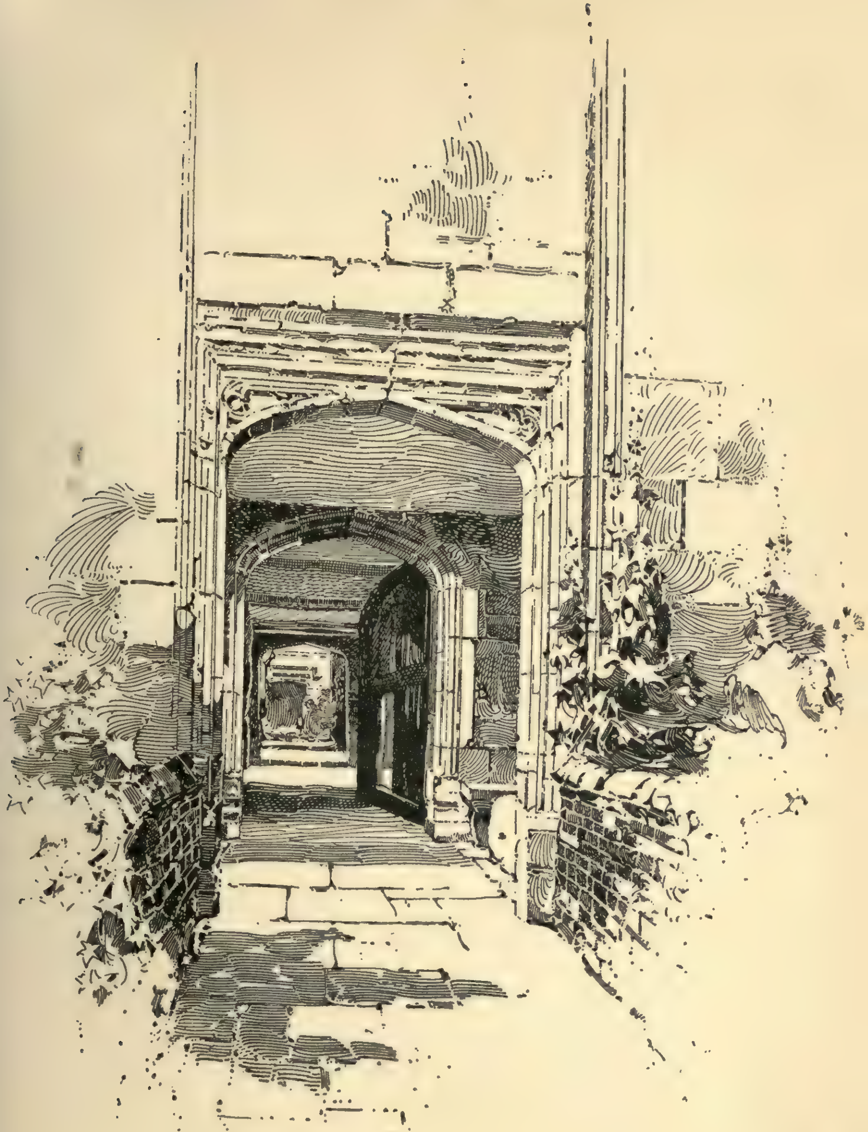
On the Bridge.

BADDESLEY CLINTON

turn to become Banch Lyon, Rouge Croix, pursuivant, Norroy, till the limit of heraldic promotion had been reached in the appointment of Garter King-of-Arms. The future Sir William Dugdale had not attained to the first of these honours when Camden died, or when that historian's death was followed ten years after by that of Henry Ferrers. But between the years 1622 and 1633 he was a constant visitor at Baddesley Clinton, coming there as Camden had done before him for the twofold purposes of conviviality and the acquisition of knowledge, and he has left it on record that to the stimulating properties of these visits was due much of his future success. In writing his *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, Dugdale made copious use of the Ferrers Manuscripts, and there was little in the science of heraldry that he could not learn from the host whom he himself described as "an eminent antiquary and a man of distinguished reflecting lustre on the ancient and noble family to which he belonged." Dugdale forms the third, therefore, of the trio of distinguished men who invest this Warwickshire moated house with a potent and permanent literary interest. Of Henry Ferrers' personality little is known save his reputation of being a quiet and modest literary recluse. But of Dugdale's blustering and strenuous nature vivid reports have been handed down. Even in the days of his nonage he would have paid small heed to the maxim that little boys should be seen and not heard, and would many times have intruded boisterously on the quiet discussions of the two more sedate savants. Long after Ferrers and Camden were dead, we see Dugdale, then Sir

William, in a very aggressive exercise of his heraldic duties, dealing severely with interlopers who tried to usurp his authority (and, what was worse, intercept his emoluments), tearing down the hatchments that these designing persons had set up, forcibly resisting their attempts to marshal funerals. A later glimpse is caught of him dining daily in jovial company at a Cook's House in the Tower of London after mornings passed in poring over its records. This was as late as 1676. But the researches at Baddesley Clinton may have come back in such moments to the memory of the old herald. Nine years after, Evelyn shows him to us, dining with the Earl of Clarendon, boasting of eighty-one years and a sight and memory still perfect. In the following year he was found sitting in his chair at Blythe Hall, dead. Strenuous to the last, he had tarried too long in the meadows near his house. What this old herald was doing in a wet meadow it is impossible to conjecture.

His death closed the pleasant lengths of Baddesley Clinton's literary story. It had run its sedate course for over sixty years, and had only been interrupted by two domestic events, common ones to all country houses whether moated or not. In October 1582, Henry Ferrers married Jane, daughter and coheiress of Henry White, Esquire of Warnborough, County Hants. This was the year of young Throgmorton's assassination plot and of the forming of the Association to protect Elizabeth's life. Four short years after, Henry Ferrers was a widower. His young wife (she was only twenty-three when she died)



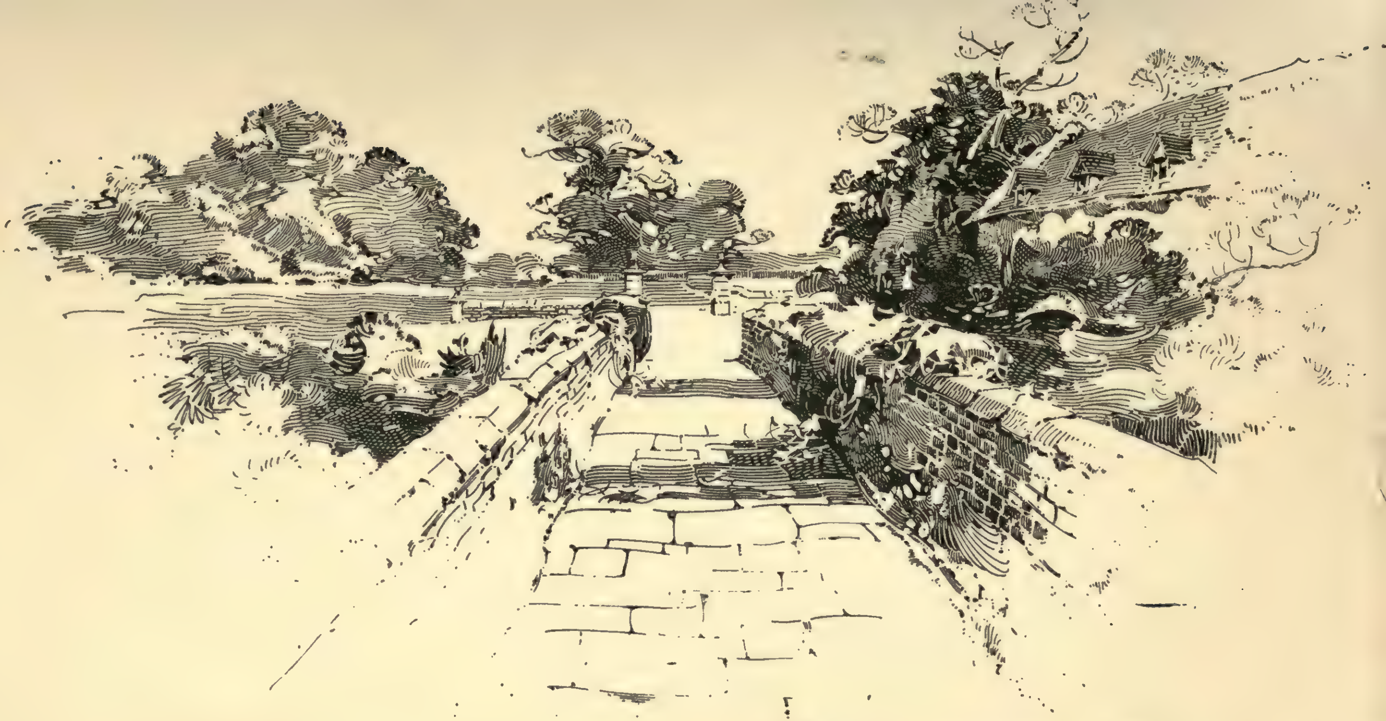
The Tower Arch

BADDESLEY CLINTON

left him a son, Edward, and a daughter, Mary. While this fatality was falling upon the happy Warwickshire home, brutal London crowds, athirst for blood, and stimulated by the rumour that by Elizabeth's own orders every hideous detail of an execution for high treason was to be carried out to its fullest and bitterest limit, fought and cursed round the streaming scaffold of the Babington Conspirators.

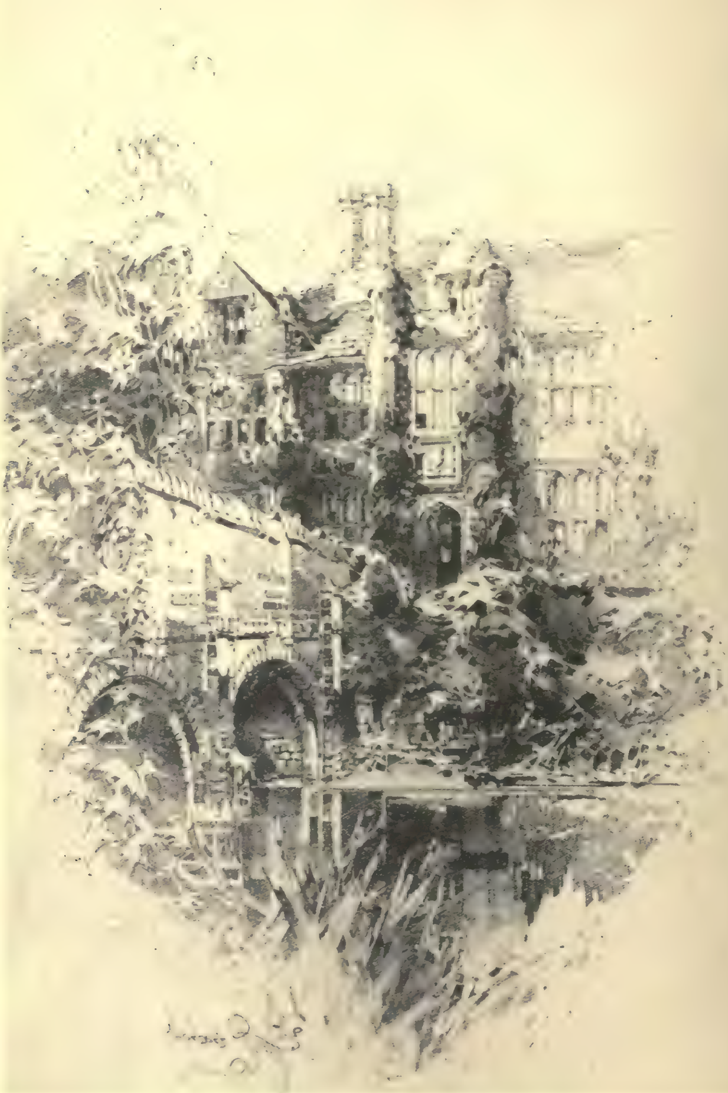
It remains only to make brief note of some of the architectural and domestic treasures of this Warwickshire moated house, through whose oak-panelled rooms and low-ceilinged corridors so peaceful and so pleasant a stream of literary story has flowed. The fine oak dining-table of the fifteenth century has already been mentioned. Henry Ferrers and Camden have been seen sitting at it over their wine. Oak indeed is everywhere in this typical English home. The dining-room, the drawing-room, nearly all the bedrooms are oak-panelled. The whole house is rich in carved fireplaces, family portraits, and stained-glass windows. An indescribable air of a rich antiquity pervades the place. Some especially fine tapestry decorates the walls of the banqueting room, from whose mullioned and stained-glass windows a commanding view is had of the deep moat which washes the house's walls on four sides. The only passage across this characteristic defence is on the north-east side, over an ivy-covered bridge. This is a more modern structure, but though it compares unfavourably with the rest of the building, it is still in harmony with its history. The history of

Baddesley Clinton has been shown to be essentially a literary one. The bridge over its moat was built during what is known as the Augustan age of English literature. It dates from Queen Anne.



Bridge spanning the Moat

BADDESLEY CLINTON



STANFIELD HALL

XVI

STANFIELD HALL

STANFIELD HALL is a perfect specimen of a Tudor moated house, and recalls the divergent memories of a personality and a romance which will be always immortal, and of a vulgar and brutal crime which some may think had better be forgotten as soon as may be. The names of Amy Robsart the heroine of *Kenilworth* and Rush the murderous steward do not look well together in the same line, and it will be better to deal with the murderer, whose memory should have made this Elizabethan house haunted, before passing to the consideration of the heroine of Sir Walter Scott's greatest historical novel, who lived here in Gloriana's times, and who in the end, but far away from this scene of her birth, came herself to be murdered.

Let us deal first with the case of Rush.

At the fall of a gloomy November afternoon in the year 1848, a masked and muffled figure disguising treachery and murder in the person of the bailiff of the estate, by name Rush, unconcernedly approached Stanfield Hall, crossed the bridge which spans the moat, knocked at the front door, and immediately on its being opened fired point blank at the servant who opened it, strode across her body, leaving her for dead, and carefully closing the front door after him. The weapon still smoked in his hands when the owner of the house, a Mr. Jermys, rushed from a room which gave on to the entrance hall. Rush shot him dead. Two corpses, as the murderer thought, now lay on this classic portal. But this was not holocaust enough for Rush. Mr. Jermys' son, who had been sitting with his father, came out at the sound of that second discharge, and the sickening thud of the falling body. He too instantly met his end. The wife and mother of the two murdered people now appeared upon the scene of blood, only, as the murderer thought, to meet a like fate. He fired point blank at her, and having seemingly strewn the hall of Stanfield with four victims, went out as unostentatiously as he had entered it, still masked and muffled, and closing the front door quietly after him.

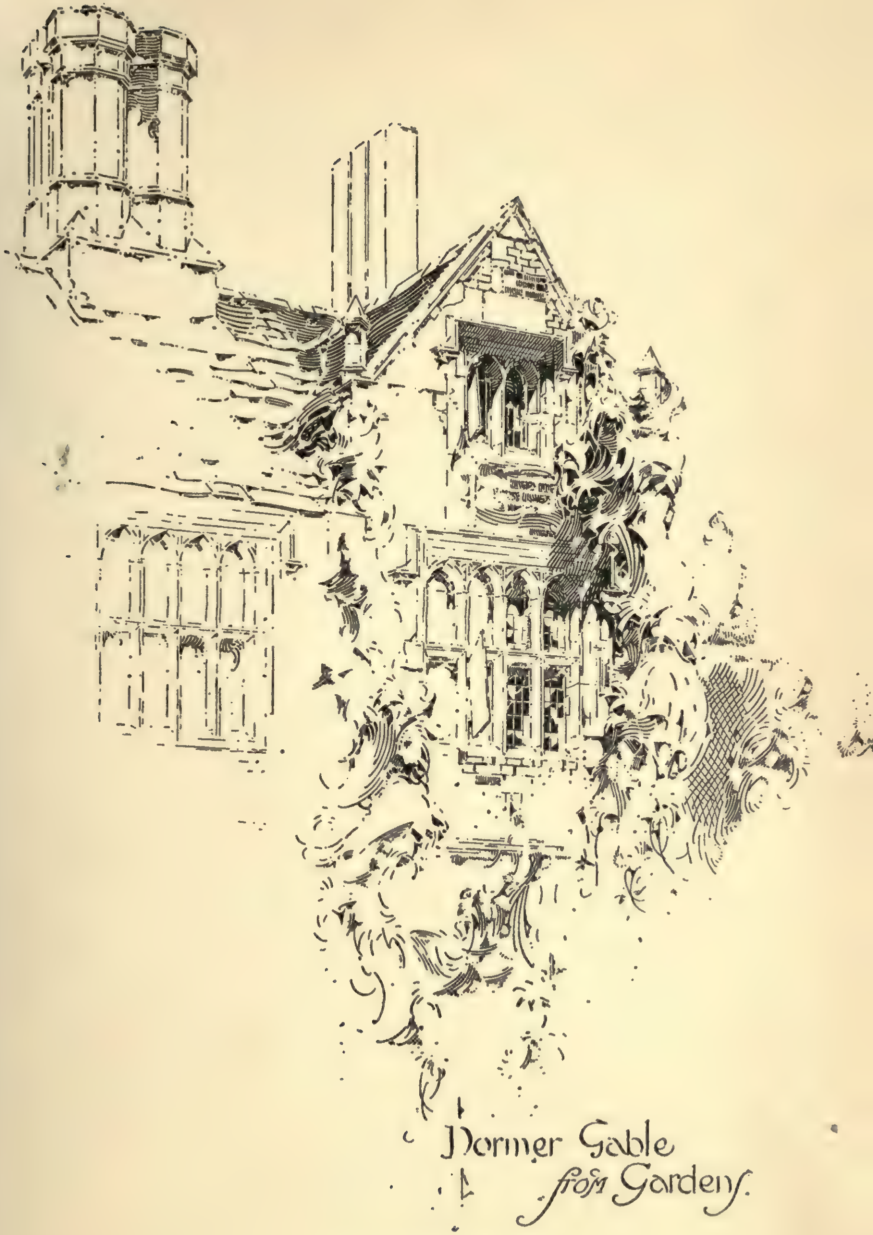
The fact that the man's intention to kill everybody who confronted him in Stanfield Hall, because he was under the just suspicion of being an unjust steward, is not so remarkable as the fact that such a monstrous crime should have been planned and carried out only sixty years ago in the very kind of place in which in bygone days this sort of atrocity was expected as an everyday possibility, and was guarded against by a moat being built round the house, and by the drawbridge over it being raised every evening at sundown. A quadruple murder was therefore committed at Stanfield Hall, because the then owners had neglected to avail themselves of this last-named opportunity for safety, which formed the real reason for the building of such a house. No murderer masked or muffled would have got into Stanfield Hall in those spacious days of Great Elizabeth, when such sprightly gentry were lurking on murderous design intent under every adjacent hedgerow, and were looking to see whether under some influence of excessive festivity or temporary lack of zeal, some such sleep-stricken porter as we read of in *Macbeth* had forgotten to raise the drawbridge. The omission of this slight formality would have entailed throats gaping all over England, in those periods of her history which are justly or unjustly called "dark," and in which architects were not thinking of an earthly house when they were building cathedrals. And so over the whole of this murderous incident of 1848 Irony shows his mocking smile.

The murderer himself, hot-foot from crime, yet unstained by a drop of his victims' blood, went unconcernedly home to his cottage, and after a perfectly natural and quiet entrance to it, and the eating and digesting of an extremely hearty supper, suddenly betook himself to conduct so abnormal that the memory of it remained an abiding and horrible haunting in the mind of the unfortunate woman who passed as his wife. Her evidence, which may not be dwelt upon here for reasons which may or may not be guessed at, eventually helped to put a halter round a guilty neck. It is enough to say that it showed Rush in the light of an agricultural Norfolk Nero.

Other evidence which in the end proved fatal to this atrocious scoundrel was given in his trial at

Norwich, and was what lawyers call largely circumstantial. The fact of his having worn a mask while committing his crimes, of having also put on unfamiliar clothing, and of having assumed a halting gait for the horrid occasion, lent to his identification by his surviving victims something of conjecture. The usual lying clock was also called to his aid. And by its assistance, and that of his unfortunate mistress, an attempt was made, with all the ingenuity that his lawyers could command, to set up an alibi. It failed in the presence of a Court crowded to suffocating-point with all the best blood in Norfolk. Adverse comment might be made on this morbid tendency of well-bred people to be spectators of such a scene in 1848; but in the face of an equally morbid curiosity betrayed on every possible similar condition in the present year of grace, it had conceivably better be withheld. Actor-managers were not in existence when Rush was put on trial for his life: nor was any world-famed novelist at hand who wished to advertise himself and his works in a fur-lined coat: neither were fashionable actresses present desirous of leaving the stage for literature for a moment or so, and turning an experience into copy. But Wealth and Fashion forgot themselves at Norwich on this occasion quite as flagrantly as they have recently done at the Old Bailey.

When the Court doors were opened shortly before the appointed time, and in response to desperate cries, the rush of some of the best families in Norfolk overpowered the usual guardians of that local Hall of Justice. Dames fought furiously for entrance by the


Dormer Gable
from Gardens.

STANFIELD HALL

side of squires of broad acres (not always their own squires it was currently believed). Shrieks not for justice but for air rose to heaven: "fans turned to falchions in fair hands": the police provided proved impotent: stones began to fly: the democracy of Norwich, swarming from every alley and side street, pressed impolitely on the rear of the struggling mass of Fashion: the presiding Judge permitted himself to grow pale and asked his javelin-men how he was to get to the seat of Justice: counsel engaged on either side despaired of being able to air their eloquence: the jury, engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle to reach the box where they were to decide on a vital issue calmly, devoutly wished themselves at their respective peaceful trades: finally a squadron of the 16th Lancers was called out to clear the entrances to the Court. Its small and dingy interior was by now packed from floor to ceiling. The atmosphere was suffocating. The flushed faces of some of the best blood in Norfolk, thrust forward to get a view of the still empty dock, began to grow pale in spite of the wavings of fans and the inhaling of smelling-salts. Some ladies cried to be carried out. Such was the crowding that no such feat was possible. Some noble dames it is believed nearly paid for this experience with their lives. Amidst a scene of indescribable tumult and excitement, the Judge took his seat upon the Bench. All eyes that still had the power of seeing were riveted upon the dock. Rush appeared guarded by two warders.

He was the only calm person present. The natural paleness of his face was heightened by his red mutton-chop whiskers, but not a muscle moved in it; not a tremor stirred the broad hands which he folded carelessly over the dock railings; his blue eyes remained perfectly steady even when they rested on the two survivors of his crime. Mrs. Jermys and the servant who had opened the door to him on the fatal night were within a few yards of him, stretched in invalid-chairs from which they had to give their evidence. Both were still scarcely out of danger, and restoratives had frequently to be given to them by nurses. Rush looked at these destined victims, still suffering so much as to be scarcely able to speak above a whisper, as if he had never seen them before. This callousness gave many unthinking spectators who had not sounded the depths of depravity possible in the human heart, the idea that he was an innocent man; and the delusion was strengthened when they noticed that the prisoner did not move a muscle of his face, but in fact seemed if possible more at ease as Circumstance slowly enveloped him in a relentless chain. At the end of a trial which stirred all England to the heart, Rush was found guilty and sentenced to death. He said that he was an innocent man, and continued to remain perfectly calm. On the night before he was executed he was asked what he would have for dinner. He answered at once, "Roast pork and prune sauce," adding impressively, "and don't forget the prune sauce." He was hung outside Norwich Gaol on the morning following this elegant repast. He maintained an air of injured innocence to the last, though he was supported in a dazed condition by two warders to the scaffold. A squadron of the 16th

Lancers had to guard that engine of Justice from a drunken and infuriated mob who fought round it like mad dogs.

It is pleasant to turn from such a sordid episode as this, to the romantic side of Stanfield Hall's history, though this romance after running a course pre-eminently romantic was destined also to end in violent death. Amy Robsart was born at Stanfield Hall during the temporary tenancy of the place by her father, Sir John. The immortal pages of what some judges think the finest historical romance ever written, show her growing to girlhood amidst the happiest surroundings, in a moated house on the fringe of Exmoor. If for Lidcote Hall, Stanfield Hall is read, *Kenilworth* can be well left to tell the story of a vivacious and spoilt girlhood which was destined to grow up among these grey gables and green Suffolk park-lands, to an end so tragic. The Wizard of the North was very careful of his facts even when he was going to work them into romances, and the Waverley Novels will be found in the end to contain more true history than much that is issued in heavier volumes under the solemn yet sleepy eye of the University Printing Press of Oxford.

And so as Stanfield Hall was certainly the scene of Amy Robsart's birth, it was probably the scene of her wooing by the splendid, disguised, and perfidious Earl of Leicester. The light that never was on land or sea at once falls upon this Suffolk home. The genius of Sir Walter asserts itself, and the full course of Amy Robsart's love-story takes visible form; peoples the old house and its noble park-lands with a whole army of wanderers from the World of Dreams! To the imaginative visitor, and no visitor need trouble to visit such houses as these unless he has an ample store of imagination packed in a fanciful portmanteau, what delightful figures from Sir Walter's great romance do not step from those enchanted pages, and stir about this Lidcote of the novel now transformed to Stanfield Hall! We see in the mind's eye the melancholy Tressilian with head bowed from his recent discomfiture at Cumnor Place riding slowly across the bridge over the moat, scarcely noticing the honest, stout, weather-beaten forester's hearty greetings. (Bill Badger was probably fresh from his feat of treading on Bungay's tail, in order that the howl of his favourite hound might rouse old Sir Hugh Robsart from his long lethargy.) The sad events which brought about the good old Knight's dangerous sickness now take form before our eyes in a series of living pictures. Varney, "worse heraldry than metal upon metal, more false than a siren, more rapacious than a griffin, more poisonous than a wyvern, more cruel than a lion rampant,"—Varney muffled in a russet cloak pressing his noble master's suit in the South Wood. Amy Robsart listens, drinking in every word of that artfully contrived pleading, the colour deepening on her beautiful cheeks. She turns and looks long after the retreating courtier on the approach of the grey-headed clergyman who had been a confessor when the Smithfield fires flamed. Very soon after this episode the fatal elopement of the beauty of Stanfield Hall took place, and we see Varney's groom, attired in his liveries, holding his master's horse, and Miss Amy's palfrey bridled and saddled, sheltering behind the wall of the churchyard. The sunset of St. Austen's Eve lights up this fateful picture. Now arrives that serving-man on the bonniest grey tit Will Badger's eyes ever rested upon, bearing the news of the Earl of Sussex' dangerous sickness. We note with Mumblazen, the herald of the house, the silver cognizance on the messenger's arm,—a fire-drake holding in his mouth a brick-bat under a coronet of an Earl's degree. Soon after this, Wayland Smith is seen changing himself from a farrier into a serving-man by putting on a new suit and turning up his dyed moustachios: Tressilian and he start Londonwards to save the Earl of Sussex, and lay a petition on behalf of the errant Amy before Elizabeth. Their horses' iron hoofs clang on the drawbridge. The howling of the old Knight's hounds rises in a mournful farewell from the kennels which lie at no great distance from the Hall, and which are surrounded by the same moat.

One more picture before we detach one of these delightful wanderers from the realm of romance for our special guidance and instruction in this survey of Stanfield Hall,—an interior this time. It is Saint Lucy's Eve, three years before Tressilian and Wayland's departure for London on that joint search for justice and an antidote to the "Manna of St. Nicholas," which had been put into the Earl of Sussex' broth. In that long low parlour, the walls hung with implements of the chase, a company are assembled to witness the feats of a travelling juggler. By the side of the massive stone chimney, over which hung a sword and suit of armour which had rung to the onslaughts of the battle of Stoke, sits Sir Hugh Robsart—a man of unwieldy size. Amy nestles beside him. Leicester's allurements had not touched her yet. She is betrothed to Tressilian, who with fond eyes watches the beautiful girl's intentness on the mysteries in progress. We can see the clowns and the clownlike squires of the neighbourhood staring open-mouthed at the travelling juggler's art, which they take to be magic. So does Amy herself. Tressilian sees that fairest face he ever looked upon growing pale, and the bright eyes dim, at the sight of that seemingly unpremeditated display of marvels. He comes to the rescue of that beauty in distress; exposes the artist's tricks; allays those delightful fears. The herald of the family, Master Mumblazen, smiles approval of Tressilian's exposition.

It is this delightful figure of the withered, thin elderly gentleman with a cheek like a winter's apple, his grey hair partly concealed by a high hat shaped like a cone, that I propose to detach from these *revenants* from the world of romance, and press him into our service as guide over Stanfield Hall. Who would know its treasures better than Master Mumblazen, herald, antiquar, and sworn friend of the house? Will he not with formal and learned tread show us over it? What better guide could be had, especially if we have left our Murrays in the inn at Norwich? We shall get more details in our present company, even though it is an earlier edition, and speaks in language somewhat archaic. So in Master Mumblazen's company we will view the architectural and domestic features of this house, which must have been admired and catalogued in quaint handwriting by many a character of his type, no doubt some of them quainter still. This, then, in language not too heraldic, is Master Mumblazen's account of Stanfield Hall :—

"Brick ; nearly encompassed by a moat ; lies to the south-west of Norwich, in the parish of Wydmonham. The Hall is a substantial pile. The entrance is approached over a brick bridge of two arches, spanning the moat which surrounds the house. There is a coat of arms over the porch door." (Here we should have something about *seiant* in the parlour, or *passant* in the garden, not to say anything about necks *reguardant.*) "The walls are of white brick and the rest of slate. Notice the arched heads to the upper lights of the windows. The dormer gables being plain, instead of the usual crow-step arrangement, give the place a somewhat earlier character than it is entitled to. But view the octagonal turrets with their finials at the main angles of the building. A similar treatment of the dormers are of course familiar features, and, though used somewhat sparingly, produce a good effect. The growth of ivy and creepers against the walls adds colour and contrast to the scene." (Here would follow another illustration drawn from Heraldry's jargon.)

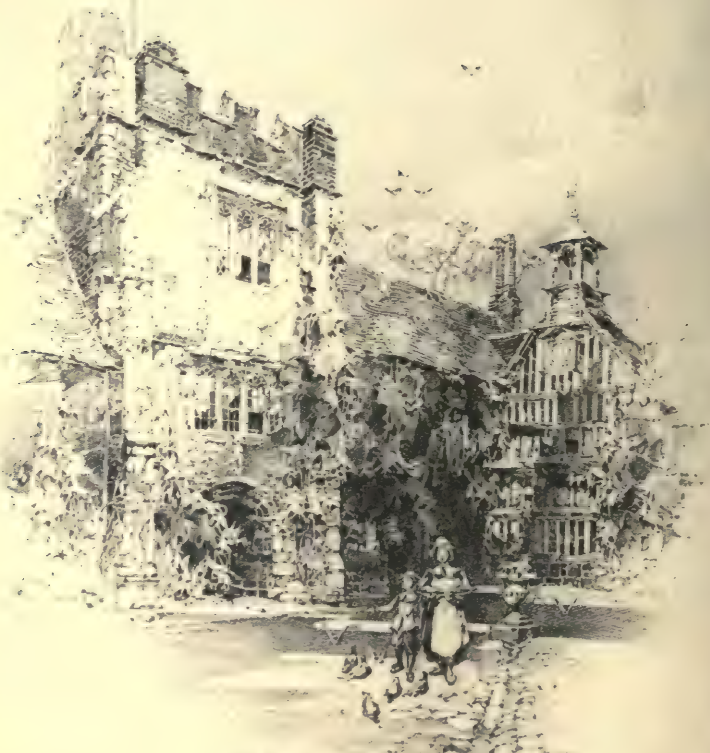
"Notice the fine trees flanking the building on each side ! And also notice that the outer wall is groined with stone ribs springing from ample columns !" (Here a sandwich case and a flask would be hurriedly consulted—and in the interval of this cessation from hostilities, we have got inside the house : and Master Mumblazen may be again imagined speaking.) "Look," he says, "at the elaborate groining of this inner hall: view its fan-stone tracery! also springing from angle columns! Note also the grand ceiling over the staircase! Though the staircase, I notice, is not what it used to be 25 Eliz.," etc. etc. etc.

Let us now put something of the history of the owners of the house into the mouth of this learned guide, if he can be imagined still walking the glimpses of the moon, as he will assuredly live for ever in the pages of *Kenilworth*! This is what Master Mumblazen would have told us about Stanfield Hall's owners:—

"In the 12 Henry VII Edmond de la Pole Earl of Suffolk, granted this lordship to Elizabeth Robsart widow of Sir John Terry Robsart from whom it at length descended to John who was Lord of the Manor, Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in the first of Edward VI. This John Robsart had a pardon from the said King by the advice of Edward Duke of Somerset, the Protector, and the Council, of all treasons," etc. etc. (Here Master Mumblazen would pause at the point where learning was about to lay bare family scandals—then on he would go again.) "Soon after he died leaving, by Elizabeth, his wife, a daughter and heir, Anne——"

This Anne was Amy Robsart.

For the benefit of those who have not been able to follow Master Mumblazen's description of Stanfield Hall, it may be said that there is a fine view of the place in Neale's *Views of Gentlemen's Houses.* It represents the east-south-east side of the building. It, however, in the opinion of the writer, competes unfavourably with the accompanying illustration.



Courtyard Ightham Mote

XVII

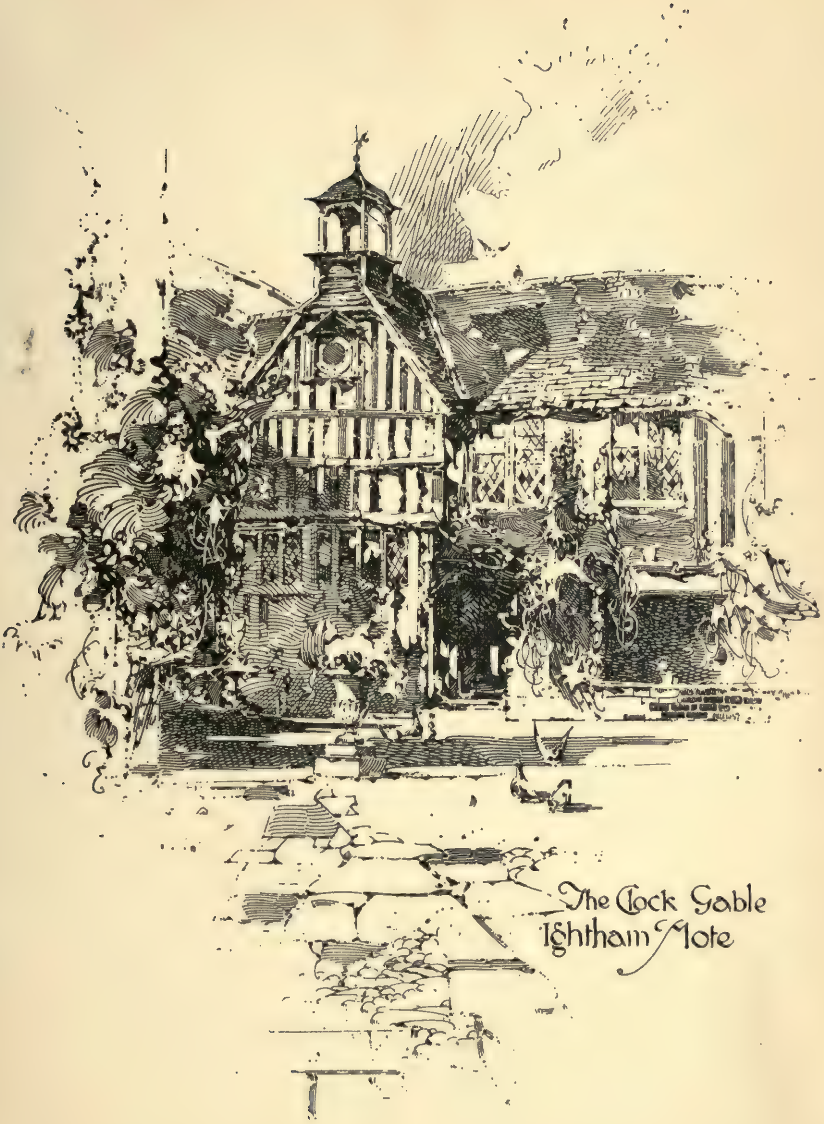
IGHTHAM MOAT

IF Compton Winyates has been called a house in a hole, Ightham may be described as being a house in a ravine, if such a precipitous expression may be properly applied to the pastoral scenery of Kent. The descent to the place, especially by a certain footpath, is almost headlong. Suddenly this moated manor is seen hiding itself in the opening of a small valley. Nor does the word "hiding" quite convey the weird secretiveness of the site. Weird better suggests the first impression made on the mind at the first sight of Ightham, and especially is this the case if the place is first seen at the close of a winter's afternoon with snowflakes falling about gables which seem to be nodding in a conspiracy of silence, or melting into the broad and dark waters of a moat, whose murmurs seem the murmurs of distrust. The house wears a wicked look.

Nothing of this nature, however, on a first search, is to be found in its history, unless it be the former occupation of the house by Brackenbury, Richard the Third's Lieutenant of the Tower. This noble proprietor rode out of Ightham, gallantly armed, to join Crookback's army at Bosworth field. At first sight this feudal feat suggests only a martial leaning. But, warlike doings apart, this Brackenbury was much too close an associate of a villain to escape from the suspicion of having been one himself. And his memory is not the only factor which inspires the suggestion that Ightham wears a wicked look. What shall be said of the striking position of an oubliette giving directly into unknown depths, and placed as it were in an ambush which no unsuspicious person could help falling into, immediately outside the Jacobæan drawing-room door? The situation of one of these strange contrivances at Broughton Castle is near enough to what is called the Council Chamber to make visitors meditate. But the oubliette at Ightham can be made to yawn so immediately on the threshold of a room devoted to hospitality, as to positively give the visitor pause. Doubts arise as to the *finale* of certain bygone receptions. A *congé* could have been given here to a departing guest to which the words "Good-night" would have been irrevocably applicable.

The architecture of the place reflects three distinct periods, so harmoniously blended by accident or design, that they seem at first sight a perfect whole. And it is not till a near view is taken, that the days of the early Edwards, of the Tudors, and of the First James are seen memorialized in a building whose secrecy of position, picturesqueness of general appearance, and broad girdle of running water washing its four walls, justly entitles it in the opinion of experts to the claim of being the typical moated house of England and the one most typically moated. There are two entrances to

Ightham. Each, of course, is made over stone bridges which have taken the place of the wooden ones capable of being raised. The more insignificant of these two bridges is on the north side of the house, and though unpretentious in size, it has, in the course of ages, performed two duties whose significance is extreme. It now leads the way over the moat to that kitchen department of a house whose hospitality has been for centuries proverbial. In bygone days it not only served the purpose which it serves now, namely an entrance for eatables; but in moments of storm and stress it was used as a sally-port, from which defenders of the house rushed out at the most unexpected moment, and fell upon the rear of assailants who were occupying themselves with the architecture or the defensive properties of the main entrance on the other side of the building. This main entrance is likewise made over a stone bridge, and through the archway of a gatehouse which looks like a porter's lodge of an Oxford College. The quadrangle into which it gives has also an academic air. Grey is the sober and prevailing colour, and this is relieved in the summer by the bright hues of a profusion of flowers growing in an ordered riot against the four walls of the courtyard. The entrance to the house itself is in the north-east corner of the quadrangle, and is typical of the proverbial hospitality of past owners. You have no sooner passed through the cosy courtyard than you are in the dining-room. And the dining-room at Ightham is represented by the superbly proportioned beauties of a banqueting hall dating from Yorkist or Lancastrian days, and which, for its size, is probably the finest of its kind to be met with in the moated houses in England. Its beautiful oriel window commands a view of the courtyard. The height of the roof is remarkable, yet lends an air of added elegance by its loftiness; and is in immediate contrast to the other living-rooms in the house, where ornamented ceilings may be put to the ordeal of touch, by the simple expedient of a man of average height raising his right hand above his head. The lowness of these ceilings gives rise to thought. And it may account at the same time for our ancestors' habit of extremely early rising. Their speculations on future events were not so soaring as ours. And they did not, as a consequence, call for so much empty space above meditative and often equally empty heads. Comfort and not range, were the necessaries of their naive musings on men and things. But here stepped in the necessity which drove them out of their houses at such unearthly hours in the morning. (Everybody rose at five o'clock in England when Henry the Eighth was King.) For, as all the windows of such places as Ightham were not made to open, and could never be used for the purpose; and as the ceilings of the bedrooms were as low as the ceilings of the libraries and drawing-rooms; the whole household were glad to get out into the fields or the courtyard as soon as the day broke, to avoid being asphyxiated. The height of the banqueting hall at Ightham, so particularly noticeable, is only another example of the steps that had to be taken to supply the place of an absent ventilation. The constant steam of eatables must have always been ascending in those hearty



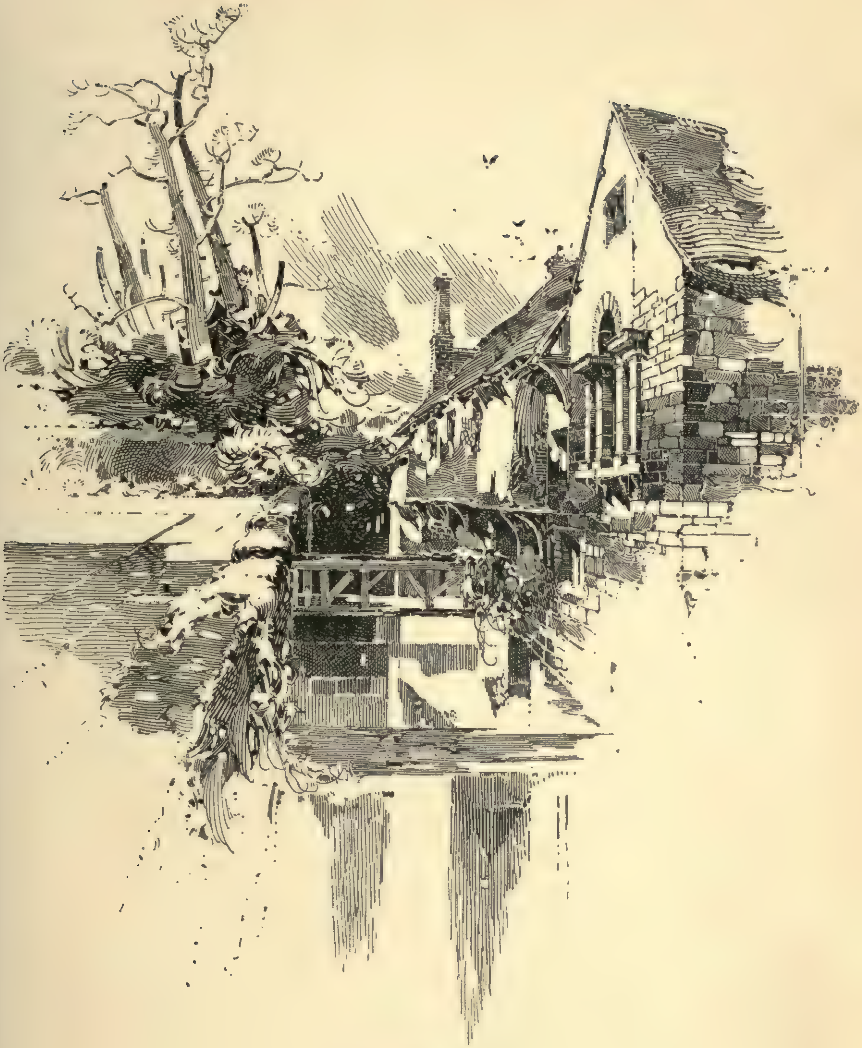
The Clock Gable
Ightham Mote

days when the commons of England at all events were always merry, and when a Duke and Duchess of Northumberland might have been seen breakfasting at five o'clock in the morning on a great shin of beef and two pints of strong beer. Those hospitable fumes eternally ascending had to go somewhere. The hall windows could not be opened. A high-pitched roof to the banqueting hall was the only resource.

The north side of Ightham, or, to speak more accurately, the side of the house which nestles nearest to the precipitous hillside, is the earliest part of the building, and is enriched by some black-and-white timber-work, which is well seen from the winding road above. This is the most picturesque view of the place. It was the last which Brackenbury would have caught of his old home, as he rode dejectedly away with his followers to Bosworth field. This side also shows Ightham at its weirdest. Before the untimely footsteps of a not altogether unsuccessful restoration were heard pattering about the place, it was here that, at the fall of daylight, the old house put on a ghostly air, and no surprise is felt when one learns that this is the part of the house which was held to be haunted. For a long time ghosts were the only people that dwelt in it; and a succession of low corridors, and sleeping-rooms with ceilings lower still, echoed only to the haunted footsteps of these shy visitors from the world fantastical, whose silent approach infects most people with a shyness greater still. Through this part of the building access lay originally into the chapel. But would-be worshippers one night thought they saw something walking which they didn't like, and avoided meeting a dead ancestor on their way to Mass, by making an entrance to the chapel from the courtyard. Like the hall of the house, this chapel is of its kind a perfect specimen. The roses of Henry the Eighth and Catherine of Arragon are emblazoned on the ceiling, although they are now only to be faintly seen. A desolate air pervades this deserted shrine where once live men prayed, and the ghostly reputation of the neighbouring part of the house extends its eerie influence. Worshippers long since dead seem to people the vacant and dusty pews. The incense rises of the other world. Only Time's effacing fingers touch the ancient organ, to draw from it, for a congregation which the eye cannot see, the music only heard in silence.

Associations more living are felt in the later periods of the building, and especially in the long and well-lighted drawing-room, overlooking the old-world garden, and designed in the best style of James the First. The view from this room, which faces the sunset, over moat and well-trimmed lawns, is, at that mystic hour, one of a strangely romantic charm. Cawing rooks lazily wing their way homewards; the murmur of the moat comes through windows which have, in these days of grace, learnt the way to be opened. Hesperus approaches, and the spirit of this old-world home of our ancestors is very near. So, singularly enough, is the oubliette of which mention has already been made. And it is characteristic of a house of the Ightham type that such an object of danger and mistrust should so suddenly obtrude itself, at the very moment when the mind is occupied with a contemplation of the place's serener surroundings. You turn from looking at a sunset from the window of a Jacobæan drawing-room, and a piece of mediæval treachery stares you in the face. Your hostess rises from a civilized tea-table and touches a spring at the side of the fireplace: you open a door, and if you had not been warned not to go forward, you would have fallen into the moat. Such sudden descents from hospitality would have been made earlier than the days of James the First, though the times of that learned King were villainous enough to countenance the use of such treachery. Dissimulation was everywhere in those bibulous and pedantic times. Everybody was diving into deceit. The opening of the Ightham oubliette would have been only one plunge the more.

While on the edge of this dangerous subject, it may be timely and fair to make mention of the fact that the use to which it is here and elsewhere suggested that these oubliettes were put, has been eloquently denied by an eminent French antiquary. Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc, however, it must be remembered, is an apostle of those ages which are no doubt very often ignorantly called "dark." He will have "the gorgeous Middle Ages," or nothing; and cannot listen with patience to the tale of barbarities, when men who were supposed to commit them were capable of building cathedrals. "They thought not of an earthly home who thus could build," is not only his motto for those artists who gave England Salisbury and York Minster, but for every one else apparently who was building very different sorts of places at the same time. Nor from my point of view would the cathedral motto be inappropriate for the oubliette itself. For after all, if you fell down one of these contrivances by design, or accident, there was no time for considerations earthly. And whatever else may be said about them, here are these oubliettes still staring us in the face in many old houses moated or otherwise all over the country. They must have served some purpose. Something sudden must be said for them, and we have said it. But what does Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc say for them, though he would have been glad to get rid of these suggestions of barbarity which are to be found, alas! in great numbers even in France? He says that they were what we should call sinks; and suggests, as a doubtful prop to an unlikely theory, their application for another and a more offensive purpose which cannot well be named. Perhaps in the language of diplomacy, it may be suggested in French, and the word *latrine* written. But this seems a very lame excuse. Nobody knew better than Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc where mediæval people put their slops; or why, when gabled houses were built with overhanging storeys, gallant men always gave ladies the wall—in other words, allowed them to walk as near the wall as possible. The courtesy was for the purpose of preventing them receiving the contents of the slop-pails. With a simple warning cry of "Below there!" these were discharged indiscriminately out of the windows. If such was the daily practice in cities like London and Paris, why should country people drill holes outside drawing-



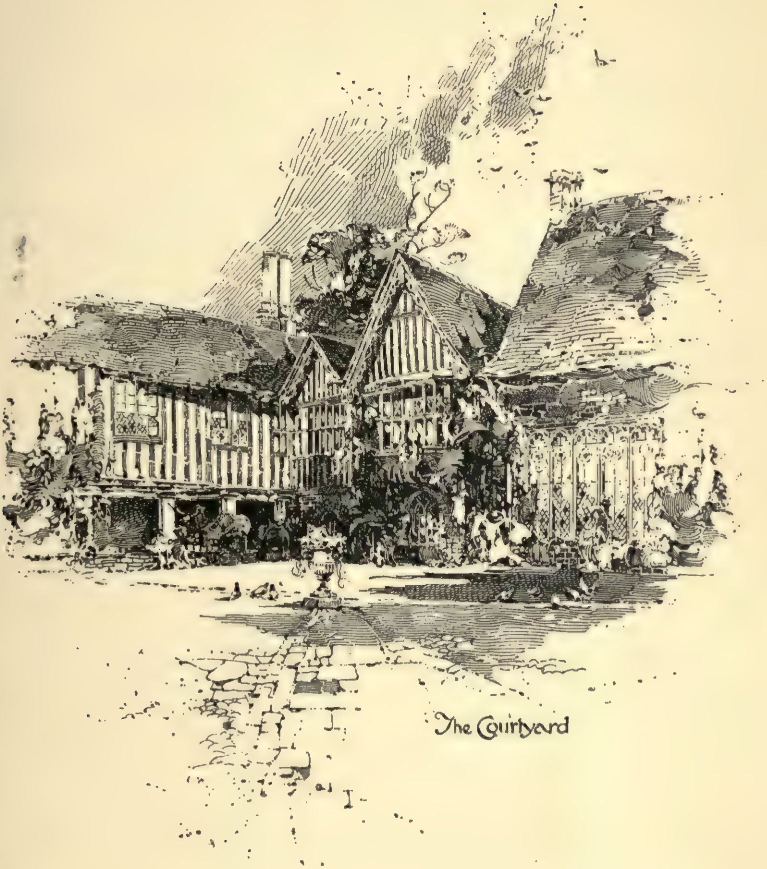
IGHTHAM MOAT

room doors to throw slops into, when the servants of the house were at hand with a moat full of water running beneath them? Were slops to be collected in the council chambers? Were drawing-rooms to give up other leavings? The oubliettes were of course used for what had to be got rid of in the way of humanity. The name oubliette should surely be sufficient. It was a place down which people fell as if by accident, whom expediency suggested should not only be removed, but should also be forgotten. No *revenants* reappeared from these unseen depths.

It has been said earlier in this paper that the first search through Ightham's history shows nothing in keeping with a certain wicked look which the house wears. The oubliette outside this drawing-room door tends to correct this benign impression. But it is a more singular thing still that this very drawing-room itself, of all rooms in the house the most homely and social-looking, should be connected with a character possessing every quality for an ideal lady of the manor, who yet through the medium of her very personality connects Ightham with one of the darkest episodes in English history. In the neighbouring parish church there is a brass erected to the memory of this lady with a curious inscription connecting her with that memorable incident known as the Gunpowder Plot.

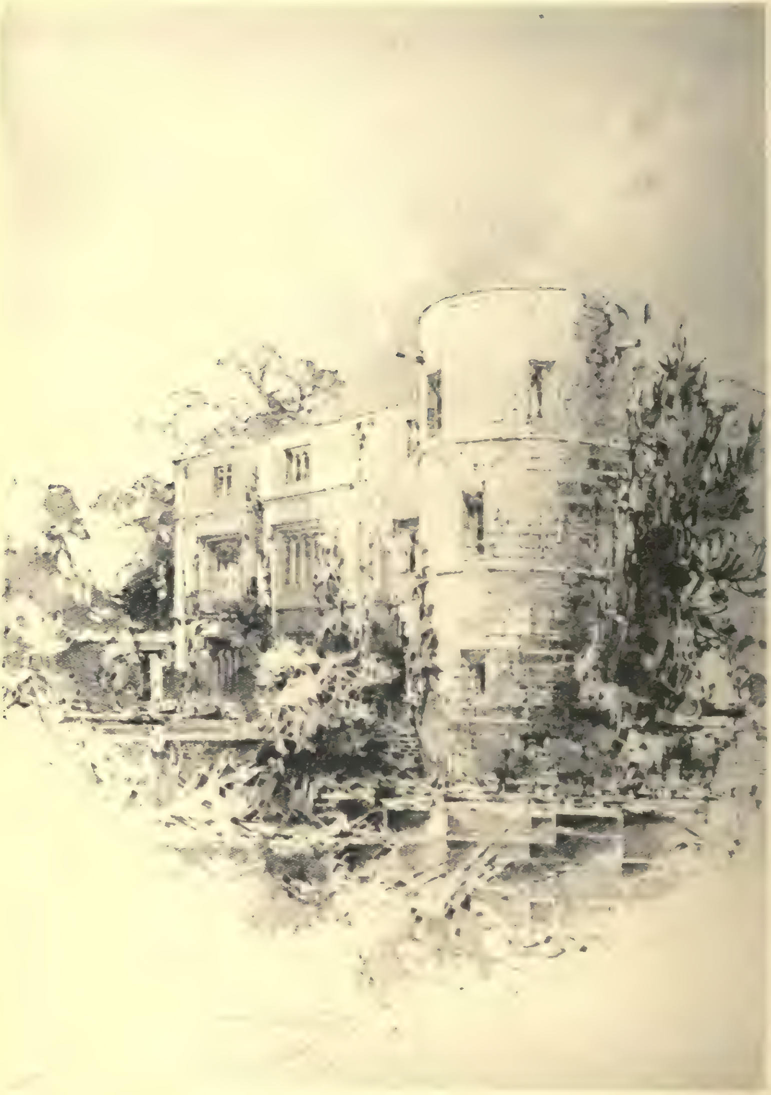
A certain quaint obscurity of phrase clouds this record of Dame Dorothy Selby's undoubted domestic virtues. It leaves also in a properly inscriptive gloom the exact nature of the part she took in the disclosing of the Gunpowder Plot. Here we have an explanation in a moment of a certain dark and treacherous look that the house wears. That is to say, if we do not embrace the theory that Dame Dorothy's connection with that abominable undertaking was confined solely to executing a representation of it in that tapestry-work in which she so excelled. This latter theory always seemed to be strained to the verge of an absurdity, yet to an absurdity not absolutely capable of proof, till a story carefully kept in a house so far away from Ightham as Gloucestershire came to the rescue and made a present of the evidence required. It would seem that at about that period of the Gunpowder Plot when the heavy and continuous rainfalls of the early autumn of 1605 were making Sir Everard Digby and Guy Fawkes wonder whether the powder stowed under the Parliament House was not getting damp (the sinister reflection occurred to the pair as they sat shivering over the fireplace at Sir Everard Digby's beautiful house at Gayhurst), this Dame Dorothy Selby, in the course of that round of country visits which was beginning to be made possible by the slowly improving conditions of the roads (if improving should not be the missing word), had occasion in this friendly circuit to pay a visit to the country seat in Gloucestershire already referred to. There was assembled what we should call in these days a large house-party. The owners of the place, being of the Old Faith, had to pay heavily for the privilege of not going to a Protestant church on Sunday, but by the lenity of a statute they were allowed the latitude of entertaining Catholic guests. Amongst these it appears were two of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, concealing their dreadful secret under the amenities of social life, and showing no sign, save that perhaps of pale faces, and of furtive glances in unguarded moments, of that abominable secret which lay already stored under the Parliament House. Catesby, the contriver of the Plot, is said to have been one of these visitors. Who the other was is doubtful, but it would very likely have been Catesby's servant Bates. (In this case the visitors' list at the Gloucestershire house must be reduced by one, and a concealed conspirator introduced into the company in the servants' hall.) By one of those accidents which always occur in similar undertakings, and which are never counted upon, some such reference was made to the probable dampening of the gunpowder from the incessant rain, as had passed between Sir Everard Digby and Guy Fawkes at Gayhurst. It was a chance word spoken aside in a drawing-room supposed to be empty; and it was made by Catesby to a friend-conspirator, or to that Bates who was a conspirator's servant. The reference, however, was made, and speaker and hearer left that supposititiously empty room. But behind a screen drawn close to keep the draught from the fire, and unknown to that departed and guilty pair, another hearer was sitting. Dame Dorothy Selby had been at her silent work of embroidery. The needle must have dropped from her nerveless fingers as her utterly unsuspecting ears were invaded suddenly by that tremendous secret. The entrance of several of the other guests found her sitting shivering, with her eyes fixed in a frightened stare, and the embroidery-work lying unnoticed on the floor. The hostess thought that her guest had had some sort of stroke, and implored her to let a doctor be sent for. Dame Dorothy Selby made the excuse of an intermittent ague, which would pass of itself, and went to bed. She left the Gloucestershire house for Ightham the following morning.

So runs the story which has passed through generations of a county family. It may be a true one, in spite of the fact that this is the first time it has been written. It certainly not only explains an obscure line in Dorothy Selby's monumental inscription, but sheds a light still much needed on a doubtful episode in the story of a conspiracy which, in spite of a world-wide notoriety among stories infamous, and the assistance of recent deep and scholarly research, still remains singularly dark and doubtful. Who sent the warning letter to Lord Mounteagle is still an unproved quantity in the story of the Gunpowder Plot. That the Government had intelligence of the plot before that letter was sent at all, has been proved lately and practically to demonstration. That the agents of the English Secret Service reaped the advantage of Dame Dorothy Selby's undesigned eavesdropping in Gloucestershire seems a contingency more than probable, as is the certainty that they would keep as a secret inviolable all real facts as to how the information came to them, and from what source.


The Courtyard

IGHTHAM

The gloomy and distrustful look of Ightham Moat has thus been connected with an episode which should more than account for such an appearance, and the history of the old house has at the same time drawn into its story the figure of a lady of the manor who was pre-eminently worthy of such a post. It is pleasant indeed to turn from this dark experience of Dame Dorothy Selby's life, and to picture her in that ordered round of charitable and skilful duties which she performed with a regularity which never slackened or faltered, and which with an impress more enduring than that cut in her monument has stamped her virtues indelibly on the memory of a countryside. Frugal, yet hospitable, careful of her poor, generous to her Church, equipped for every household duty from the highest to the lowest, a fine needlewoman, and last though not least a good cook, she seems to unite in herself all those qualities which the Conqueror's great perception saw were the vital accompaniments to a proper holding of land, and which were in fact the stated conditions under which alone it could be lawfully held. This much can at least be urged for the much and ignorantly abused Feudal System. The faults of that system, as I have before had occasion to insist upon, at the very foundation of which lies the great maxim that Property has its duties as well as its rights, were the inevitable results of the weakness of human nature and the barbarities of the times. Its virtues are still evidenced in many a country property, whose owners, in their rigid loyalty in the carrying out of the duties which the possession of property entails, unconsciously put into practice the dictums of the Conqueror. No more perfect type of a lady of the manor in past times can be pointed out than Dame Dorothy Selby. And Ightham will be always associated with that distinction which is so justly hers.



WOODCROFT MANOR

XVIII

WOODCROFT

1298

THE history of this house is a record of nineteen lawsuits, and of a particularly tragic siege and capture at the close of the Civil War. The details of the last of these events will have to be given in full, to show the significance of the house, and at the risk of giving the reader a shudder. The long legal portion of its story may be passed over as briefly as the lapse of three centuries will admit of the feat, without competing too unduly with the Commentaries of Blackstone. As the original possessors of Woodcroft elected to engage lawyers to discuss family matters for, as far as can be accurately gauged, a period of three hundred and seventy-eight years, the record of their litigious activity had better be told in legal jargon. Here it is in a nutshell or a folio.

In the reign of Henry the Third, Herbert and Roger de Woodcroft held of the Abbot of Burgh, half a Knight's fee in Walton and Woodcroft, which was confirmed to the convent by a charter in the same reign, and in the subsequent reigns of Edward the First and Edward the Second. In the twenty-fourth year of Henry the Third, a fine was levied between William, son of Walter de Preston, demandant, and Gilbert de Preston, deforciant, of one carncate of land, with its appurtenances, in Woodcroft, to the use of the said William de Preston. And in the same year a fine was likewise levied of six acres of arable land, and ten acres of wood, with their appurtenances, in Woodcroft, between William, son of Roger de Woodcroft, demandant, and William de Preston, deforciant, to the use of William de Preston. And in the forty-sixth year of the same reign, a fine was levied between the same William de Preston, demandant, and Cecilia, daughter of Robert de Woodcroft, deforciant, to the use of the said William, of one messuage, one carncate of arable land, five acres of wood and fifteen acres of meadow, with their appurtenances here. By Inquisition taken in the fourth year of Edward the First (this was the time when that warrior-king was finally subjugating Wales, and was being addressed from the top of a cliff by the hero of Gray's poem), Lawrence de Preston was certified to hold, in Woodcroft, a fourth part of one Knight's fee of the Abbot of Peterborough. On levying the Aid for the Knighthood of the King's son, in the twentieth year of Edward the Third, Thomas de Preston accounted for a fourth part of one Knight's fee here, of which Walter de Preston held a sixth part. In the second year of Richard the Second (the time when Langland was writing *Piers the Plowman*), a fine was levied of Woodcroft Manor by Hugh Preston, and Alianore his wife. (This quaint spelling of our modern Eleanor should be noticed.) We have from henceforward no further mention of this lordship, till an uncertain date in the reign of Henry the Sixth, probably about the time of the battle of Northampton, when Nicholas Boxstede, cousin and heir to Winemere de Preston, released to Robert Fenne Esquire, and Julian (not Julia) his wife, the relict of Sir John Culpepper Knight, and the heirs of their bodies, all his rights in the Manor of Woodcroft and in all his other lands and tenements, in divers villages in the county of Northampton. In the same reign (at an apocryphal date which cannot be accepted), Robert Brudenell and John Buckstede brought their action against Robert Fenne Esquire, and Julian his wife, for the recovery of this manor. This John Buckstede, who was the then Lord of Woodcroft, was killed in 1464 in the neighbourhood of Northampton. This fatality occurred in a wayside attack, and not in the battle which had taken place four years previously. But at the same moment when John Buckstede lost his life from falling into an ambush, King Edward the Fourth was marrying Lady Grey.

Our legal history now skips several years in which lawlessness was the chief feature in English life, to pause at the time when Henry the Eighth ascended the throne, and Erasmus was writing *The Praises of Folly.* The possessors of Woodcroft are again seen to be litigiously busy. A fine is levied between Sir John Heydon Knight and others, demandants, and Wiliam Palliser and his wife, deforciants, of a moiety of Woodcroft Manor. And in the seventeenth year of the same reign a like fine was levied between William Hermore and John Brudenell, of the other moiety of it, and of tenements in Woodcroft and other townships. This last moiety appears afterwards to have passed into the hands of Francis Pulter, gentleman, who levied a fine on it, at the time when Henry the Eighth lay dying in the royal palace at Westminster, to the undisguised relief of every single person about him who had the slightest expectation of having to mount the scaffold on Tower Hill for no reason at all, and at a moment's notice. The other moiety came into the hands of a mediæval representative of our bankers of to-day. Goldsmiths had then just begun to initiate this paramount and useful profession (whose inner workings are, however, still a subject of conjecture to those who deposit their money with them), because goldsmiths were the only tradesmen who had to have strong-boxes. Robert Trapps was this particular goldsmith's name, and he was a citizen of London. Between this ancestor of John Gilpin Esquire, and a William Fitzwilliam Esquire, a further fine was levied; and the legal history of Woodcroft is brought to an end, possibly not too sudden, by the discovery of a Sir William Fitzwilliam in the agreeable posture of being seized of the Manor of Woodcroft, its appurtenances, effects, etc. etc., at the very time when the first Puritan emigrants were beginning to hurry aboard ship, and James the First, like some Stuart Porson, was hiccoughing Latin, and reeling nightly on that throne before which the ladies of his Court also lay prone, and overtaken.

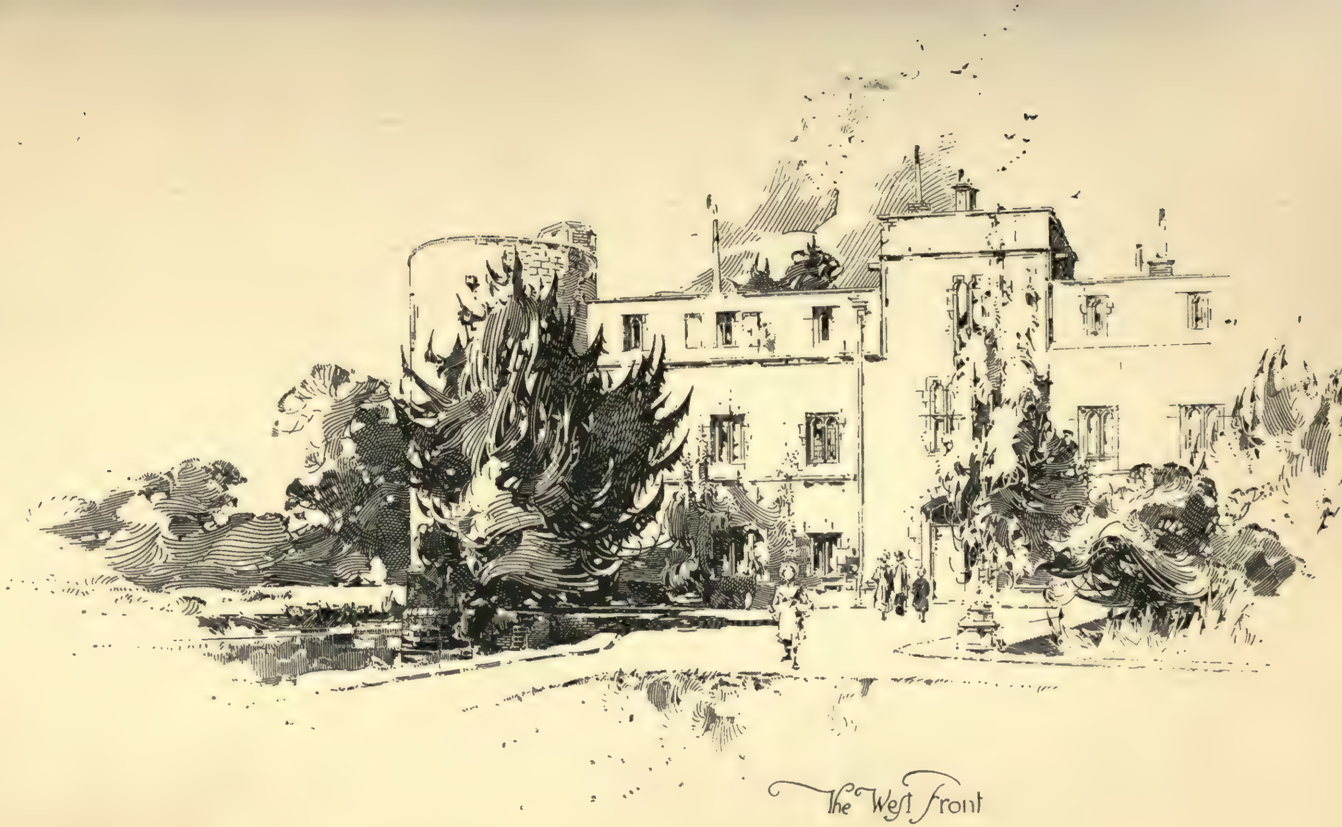
Before leaving this legal side of Woodcroft's history, a clue may be given to those who have tried to get through the maze, by recalling to their memory, or assailing it with it unexpectedly for the first time, a certain firm feudal fact. Under that engaging form of government, which may still profitably occupy the studious hours of our present legislators (barbarous as it may at first sight appear, but barbarous only with the barbarity of the times), each tenant was bound to appear, if needful, three times a year at Court, to pay a heavy fine or rent on succession to his estate, and to contribute an Aid in money in case of the reigning King happening to be taken prisoner in war; or (presuming a more lively condition of affairs) to have a son who had lived long enough to be made a Knight, or a daughter who had lived long enough to be married. Our modern Death Duties seem here to have been forecast, as everything else political has been, in no insignificant manner.

So much for the legal side of Woodcroft. But before passing to the more romantic and coloured side of its story, it will be necessary, even for the sake of the omen of siege and sack coming on, to dwell with some detail on certain of its architectural features, and on a general aspect which, for reasons which will be given, will be found to be, in the strictest sense of the word, remarkable.

One of these reasons can be given in a few words. The first impression made by Woodcroft Castle on the mind of any English architectural expert is that it is French. Accordingly, very little research soon shows that the architect who had the building of the place in his hands was fresh from erecting an infirmary at Peterborough, that his name was John of Caux, and that he was a native of Normandy.

This is not the first time that the history of these moated houses has been connected with that form of alliance which is now called the *entente cordiale.* Markenfield Hall owes much to the French builder who was fresh from putting a restoring touch to the noble minster at Ripon. But the presence of a foreign architecture is even more noticeable in Woodcroft than it is in the old home of the Yorkshire race of Knights. The date of Woodcroft is contemporaneous with the battle of Falkirk, which is another way of saying that it is a fine specimen of a manor-house of the days of Edward the First, which was hardly even in those rough and rugged days designed for a place of strength. The final episode of its story will accentuate this fact, if it does not prove it to demonstration. Meanwhile the opportunity presents itself for offering a ground-plan. The house is built in the form of a right angle, one of the sides of which is practically twice as long as the other. A moat entirely surrounds the place, though it only washes the walls of the house on one side. In the corner of the angle is a round tower. In the centre of the longer wing is the main entrance, which not only leads into the house, but used in more ancient and airy days to lead right through it, without the assistance of a door on the other side to shut out the draught, the rain, the snow, the midnight marauder, or anybody or anything else that happened to be abroad, on inhospitable business bent. At first sight the place only seems to have two storeys, but a closer investigation prevents this tale from being told, and a third storey is discovered over the gateway, which at first sight might have been mistaken for another tower. Whatever it is used for now, it was probably used formerly for a chapel. Everybody prayed assiduously in those dark days in which England was merry. Two other towers which originally decorated the house were probably destroyed when a Parliamentarian general, after having surveyed the position for a few minutes, gave as word of command "Artillery"; and that the house was as practically indefensible as subsequent events will show, seems proved in advance by the fact that neither of these two towers seem to have been embattled. The specimens that remain at Woodcroft of this form of decoration have plain parapets. The ground-floor windows of the house are all small. Those of the upper storey were all of one light, with a transom. And, looked upon in the light of these days, a singular feature of our ancestors' idea of building a liveable house was poignantly marked. A connecting staircase was a factor either forgotten by the architect, or designedly left out of his calculations. That is to say, in other words, that the basement had no way of communication with the upper storey. This seems a very artful touch in the method of secluding the inhabitants from undesirable visitors, and suggests that when the moat was of no avail the inmates went up to bed by ladder, and when they were safely landed, drew it up after them. The only other possible explanation of the existence of a house thus separated from itself is the suggestion that the ground-floor was simply used for the purpose of storage, and this seems to be simply absurd. For the rest, the moat encloses a square which was originally fronted by buildings. Offices of wood and plaster were probably their form, and time has been too strong for them. To prevent disappointment, or astonishment, or both, it had better now be clearly laid down, that the interior of this house has been so artistically modernized, that no idea can be gathered of its original state, and no surprise should be felt that the first view of its exterior suggests that it is French.

A certain page of its history has now to be read which does not in its startling brutality suggest any connection with that race which has given to a world, still so much in want of it, the language of diplomacy. And it may be said before beginning the story, that it is a strange and in some respects a regrettable thing, that the architecture of France should display itself so clearly in an English moated house which must always bear on its walls the ineffaceable stigma of one of the most brutal episodes of the Great Civil War. That significant episode in the nation's struggle for civil and religious liberty was drawing to its close in the repeated defeats of the royal cause, when on a certain day in June, 1648, Woodcroft Castle was occupied for Charles the First by a singular commander who had control over a strange garrison. The commander was a clergyman of the Church of England and Chaplain to the King (who was then admiring the beauties of the Isle of Wight from his prison at Carisbrooke): the garrison was formed of a troop of volunteer cavalry which the intrepid and militant divine had succeeded in raising in Lincolnshire. His name was


The West Front

WOODCROFT MANOR

Doctor Michael Hudson, and when he went up to one of the towers of Woodcroft to gauge the possibilities of a successful military occupation of the place in the cause of his master, they must have seemed so remote that his mind may well have wandered into a retrospect of his strange and varied life, so soon to draw to its close, and in which retrospect we may take the opportunity of accompanying him. Born in Westmoreland of poor parents, educated at Oxford, a Fellow of Queen's, his burly appearance and bluff manners did not conceal from Charles the First's eyes, not unpenetrating eyes (where men and not measures were concerned), the underlying qualities of an integrity and a steadfastness which nothing could shake. These qualities were lamentably lacking in many of the more brilliant among the Cavalier supporters. Hudson indeed might have been called in these days the Fighting Parson, and on the outbreak of the Civil War he at once threw aside the Prayer Book for the sword, or, to define his attitude to men and things more correctly, he took his Prayer Book in his left hand and a Cavalier rapier in his right. Thus adorned for ecclesiastical office, he viewed the undecided day of Edgehill, not without interference personally in that matter of desultory cavalry charges delivered more or less at random in an October mist. Under the same conditions he became a well-known figure at that strange Court, half palace and half detective bureau, which Charles the First held at Oxford. Scotland Yard, and what is left of Whitehall, still adjoin each other. In the days when Henrietta Maria and her attendants walked the groves of Merton College gardens, it would have been difficult to say which party predominated in a motley company of professional courtiers, of Puritans disguised as High Church of England men, of Jesuits disguised as servitors in the royal kitchen, and of trained political spies disguised as opportunity best suggested, and very often hiding their detective propensities under a woman's dress. The Secret Service, however, was not a profession in which Michael Hudson would ever have been likely to shine, though adverse critics have gone so far as to suggest that he was in effect an enrolled member of that august and secret body, and only assumed a boyish bluntness of speech, and an almost Alsatian truculence of manner, for the purpose of putting wary people off their guard. As a matter of fact, the King, who saw his disposition and had satisfied himself of his honesty, only used him on those unfortunately rare missions when truth, and nothing but the truth, had to be told, and that as bluntly as possible. Then the time passed when even such honest services were of avail. Billow on billow, wave upon wave of calamity swept over the King's cause. The Reverend Michael Hudson saw his royal master a prisoner, Church and State prostrate, the military genius of Cromwell instinct in a whole nation, and nothing left for him personally to do but to throw away the Prayer Book which he had hitherto kept in his left hand, and apply it, as he had long since applied the right one, to the purposes of the sword. He seems indeed to have determined on what may be called a military suicide. The regiment of horse enrolled in Lincolnshire was no doubt instructed in the same tenets. And Hudson would have been the last man in the world to shrink from telling them frankly that their hurried enrolment meant in plain words a fight to the death. Woodcroft Castle was not selected intentionally as the scene of this last adventure for a cause already lost. Hudson had really chosen it as a base from which to strike effectively at the enemy's line of communication. Loot was in prospect. And loot, even though prospective, was necessary when there was no such thing as pay. The enemy, however, was by the June of 1648 not sufficiently occupied elsewhere to be prevented from detaching, massing, and throwing upon the devoted garrison of Woodcroft a force which made a successful holding of the place a matter of absolute impossibility. Michael Hudson must have realized this in a moment when from one of those Woodcroft towers now demolished, he saw the Parliamentary force in position before the house on the morning of the 6th of June.

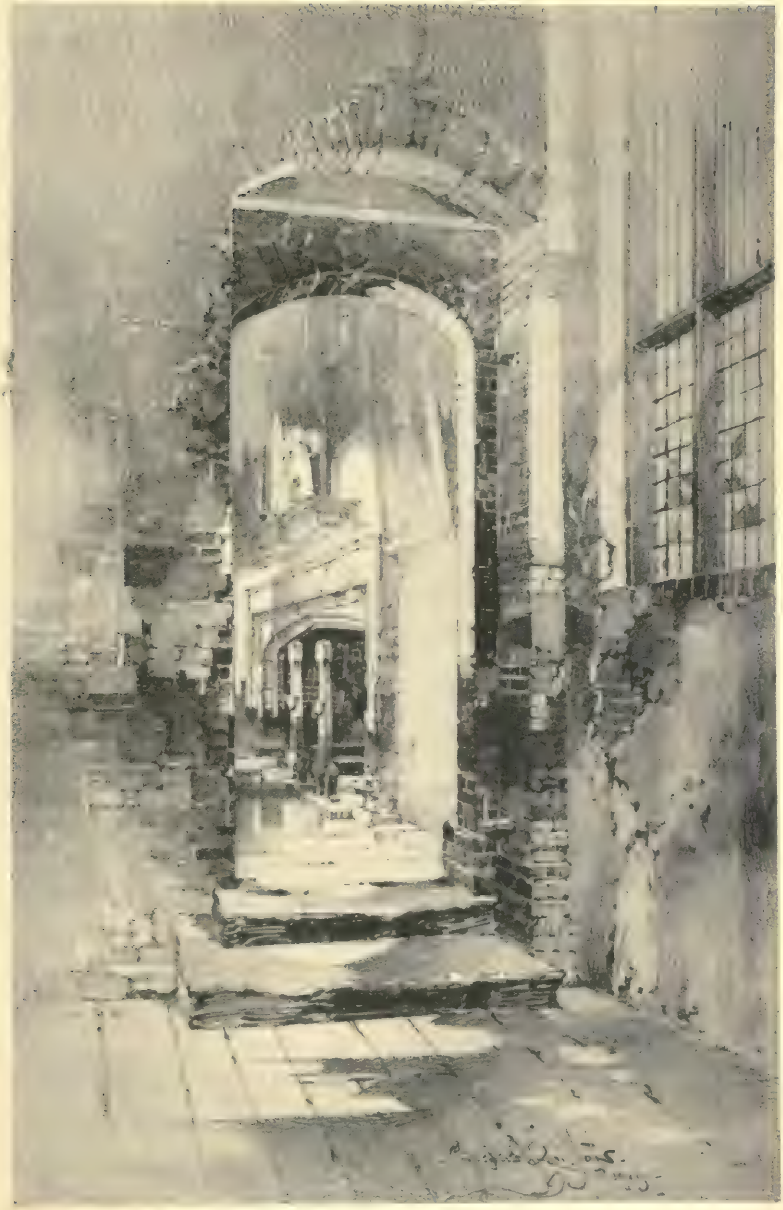
Before he had finally deserted the lectern for the sword, Hudson had made himself thoroughly acquainted with the Rubric. He was equally well versed in a certain Code for the conduct of the Civil War, which had been drawn up and put to practical demonstration by the heads of that Republican army which was now in force before this Northamptonshire moated house. He knew well that one of those provisions dealt, and dealt inexorably, with the fate of commanders for the King who risked their assailants' lives by holding a place which, from a military point of view, was not defensible. In the certain event of a capture, the whole of the garrison was liable to be put to the sword. The fate of Hudson, therefore, and his soldiers was sealed when a summons to surrender was met by a contemptuous refusal. A cannonade was immediately opened. A few outlying earthworks which had been hastily thrown up were carried by assault. The moat was crossed at a point where it did not wash the walls of the house, but not without considerable loss of life from a fire directed from the roof and the lower windows. And then the Parliamentarians, smarting under the casualties caused by a vain resistance, entered the house avenging sword in hand. A desperate fight took place on the staircase. Every inch of it was contested in a prolonged and desperate hand-to-hand fight which clogged its steps with corpses. On these the victorious and now maddened besiegers mounted slowly, till a final ascent had been effected and a final obstacle surmounted which drove Michael Hudson and the small courageous remnant of the garrison on to the roof. Quarter may in that last moment have been offered and accepted. It was certainly not granted. The final words which Hudson said to the officer who offered him his life on the surrender of his sword will never be known. What is known is that Michael Hudson, instead of surrendering, had to throw himself over the battlement and hang there between heaven and earth, clinging to a water-spout. Both those clinging hands were then cut off, and he fell into the moat. It seems that even with his hands off he contrived to swim to its banks and had also sufficient power of speech left in him to ask the enemies waiting for him on the other side, with eyes upturned and Cromwellian rapiers drawn, to allow him the favour of dying on dry land. The granting of this request was accompanied by a blow from the butt end of a musket, which beat his brains out. A crop-haired shopkeeper of Stamford who had left off cutting hair and had put his head into a steel cap, then performed some funeral rites. He cut out the tongue of Charles the First's Chaplain and hawked it about the country as an advertisement of his own prowess.

It is a disputed point as to where the remains of Michael Hudson were buried; and the place of sepulture seems a point outside the question in a consideration of such a strenuous life. But sentiment will always prevail in this final matter; and it would be pleasant to think that, by the help of some powerful Royalist influence, the mutilated remains of this intrepid Cavalier parson were laid to their last rest in some green and quiet Northamptonshire churchyard, or, as has been averred by some authorities, within the grey walls of the celebrated Oxford College which had been the scene of his setting out on many a perilous mission, and where his royal and unflinchingly served master had held his fleeting and mimic Court. Where Michael Hudson was buried will always remain a disputed matter. But what is a matter beyond dispute is this. So far as his connection with Woodcroft Castle is concerned, it can be said that he faithfully served both King and Church, and that he was murdered in the cause of both.

XIX

THE RYE HOUSE

VISITORS to the Rye House may enjoy the double experience of hearing the latest music-hall songs and viewing the scene of a plot in the days of Charles the Second. In fine weather the wonted roar goes up among the woods of "I found diamonds in Amsterdam," or some kindred vocal gem at the moment in vogue. When it rains, the same kind of chorus salutes the historian's ear from glass palaces cunningly devised for dancing, or from rooms set apart for such music in a neighbouring and supposititiously ancient inn. Tuned by such surroundings to the proper appreciation of the past, and inspired indeed by an almost feverish desire to see anything either ancient or modern, provided he can get out of earshot of these melodies of to-day, the visitor hurries across dank pleasure-grounds artfully intersected by suspicious-looking dykes, and pleasantly interpolated with merry-go-rounds, till he finds himself handed over by one guide to another, and at last standing outside a gate-house not altogether unmeretriciously mediæval. The roars and screams of "our young barbarians all at play" even now still reach the visitor's ears, as he dives desperately through the



THE RYE HOUSE

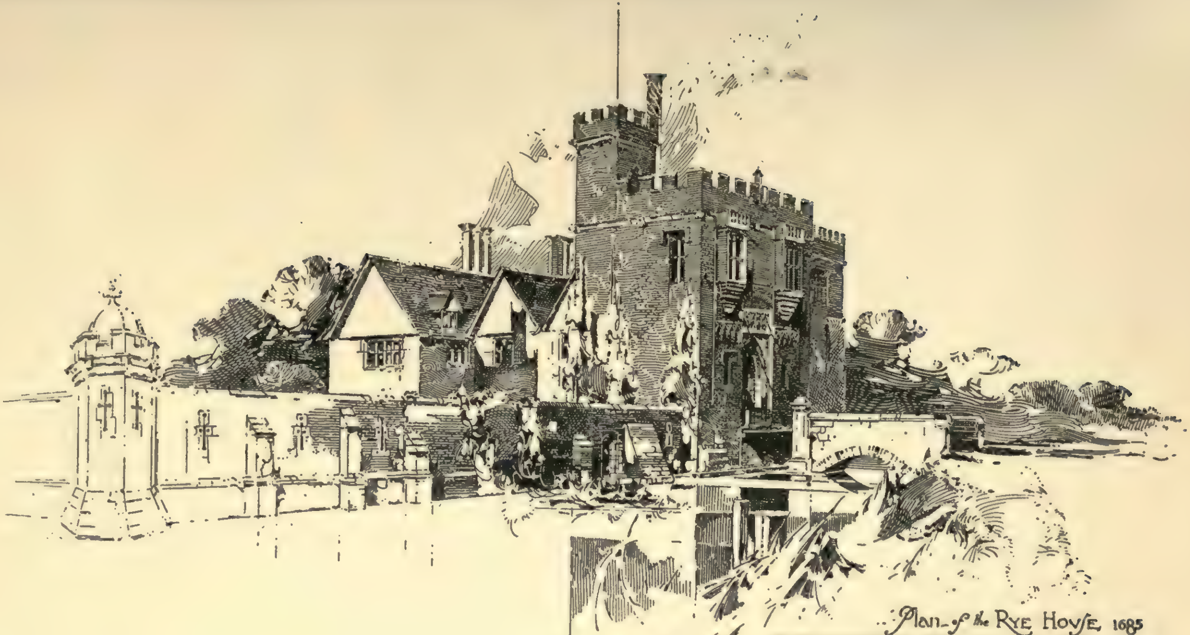
archway, and finds himself in a room full of curios, including the inevitable bed of Queen Elizabeth. A voluble guide lends humour, if not conviction, to the show, and the information is soon given that Elizabeth's is not the only bed to be seen on the premises. The celebrated Bed of Ware is in fact safely housed near a glass dancing saloon, and its size, its possibilities, probably more than the beautiful carving of satyrs on its head-board, still excite the jokes, the curiosity, or the admiration of the connoisseurs of Bethnal Green. A Shakespearean memory is summoned up by this domestic prodigy, made in the days when forty people slept in one bed with the crowns of each other's heads touching each other, and legs and bodies radiating like the spokes of a cart-wheel from that cumulative intellectual centre. Sir Toby Belch's pronouncement on the subject makes itself heard between imaginary hiccups. He says in *Twelfth Night*, advising on the form of the challenge: "Go, write it in a martial hand; be curst and brief; it is no matter how witty, so it be eloquent and full of invention: if thou 'thou'st' him some thrice, it shall not be amiss; and as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper, although the sheet were big enough for the bed of Ware in England, set 'em down." The reference would make a good puzzle in a literary competition. It suggests that Shakespeare must have seen this Rye House relic.

Meanwhile an impatient guide leads the way up a spiral staircase, in which an interesting brick handrail and newel lends the visitor aid, into that conspirators' room which in many of these old houses is as nearly inevitable as Elizabeth's bed; and in which the majority of conspirators would never have thought of conspiring. We are now on the supposed scene of the Rye House Plot. Carved oak furniture of the period is abundantly displayed to heighten the illusion, but despite the enthusiasm kindled by the scene of its display, a disquieting suggestion of Wardour Street steals over the senses. Antiques, however, cannot always be guaranteed, and for the rest all is as it should be. Wide chimneys : iron dogs : tiled floor : massive door : immense thickness of walls : portraits of everybody connected with the plot, from Rumbold, owner of the Rye House at the time, down to Jeffreys, who sentenced him to be hung, drawn and quartered ; till we come to a window through which (according to the guide) the conspirators were to shoot Charles the Second as he was returning from Newmarket. It looks to be about 55 yards distant from the existing road, along which (also according to the guide) Charles the Second was to have been returning. The distance seems excessive for a chance shot on which so much depended ; nor does the display of some firearms of the period increase a belief in long-range capabilities. Plots, however, when they have to be adapted for the use of pleasure-houses, must be made up to date. Local guides only do their business, and should never be contradicted. Maps, plans, and historical documents can be consulted when travellers get home. If they haven't had a correct version of what was intended to occur in 1683, they will have seen the Rye House at all events. As for the guide's view of the matter, let us be thankful for the professional versatility of these amusing and fluent showmen, in their honest attempts to focus the past for us; to bring unfortunately divergent events into one common plane; to give us a bird's-eye view of everything at a glance, even if that everything should happen to be an impossibility.

The Rye House Plot is in itself interesting, not only because, as the plan was laid, it was more likely to have ended in success and blood than any conspiracy of its kind in English history, but also because it was the direct outcome of a succession of masterly and Machiavellian moves on the part of Charles the Second which many historians have failed to notice, and which entitle the Merry Monarch to the honour of being the ablest of the Stuarts, as John was the ablest of the Angevins.

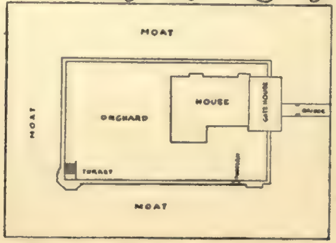
The political position which gave birth to the meditated violence may be described in a few words. Charles the Second saw his personal popularity fading at the very moment that his arbitrary Ministers thought that they had finally got him into a corner. He appeared to Parliament to be in that dilemma, because he pretended to be frightened at the imminence of another outbreak of civil war, and for the first time in his life never went anywhere without being surrounded by his life-guards. This was really only a royal ruse. It deceived those it was intended to. Parliament was certain that a total absence of money ministered to this unusual and cowed attitude of their brave yet Merry Monarch. They thought, therefore, that they had only to keep on refusing supplies in a strictly constitutional manner, for it only to be a matter of time for Charles to be at their feet. Speculations on certainties, however, are sometimes misleading. They proved to be so in this case. For just at the very moment when Parliament believed that the penury of the Treasury left Charles at their mercy, they made the unfortunate discovery that a pecuniary arrangement which he had made behind their backs while he was riding about the country closely guarded, and pretending to be frightened, had taken the form of a private subsidy payable by France, which made him completely independent of Parliamentary aid. Charles took a tactician's view of the situation. In the midst of the confusion caused by the discovery he struck his final blow. He dissolved the Parliament he had hoodwinked, and in the kingly confidence engendered by the knowledge of an ample private balance at his bankers, appealed by Royal Proclamation to the judgment of the nation at large.

The answer was one universal burst of loyalty which sent Shaftesbury, who had led the Opposition, packing to that Amsterdam whose possibilities have already been sounded at the opening of this paper, and threw the whole of his party into the utmost political dejection. They had cause for it. They had, in the most complete acceptation of the term, been dished. Some people, however, never know when they are beaten and in a condition to be decimated, unfortunately for themselves and others. Lord Essex, Lord Howard of Ettrick, Lord Russell, Hampden, and Algernon Sidney, instead of realizing that in the recent political engagement with the King they had in a figurative sense lost all their ammunition, all their



The Rye House as it appeared at time of Plot

Plan of the Rye House 1685



MOAT
MOAT
ORCHARD
HOUSE
GATE HOUSE
BRIDGE
TURRET
MOAT

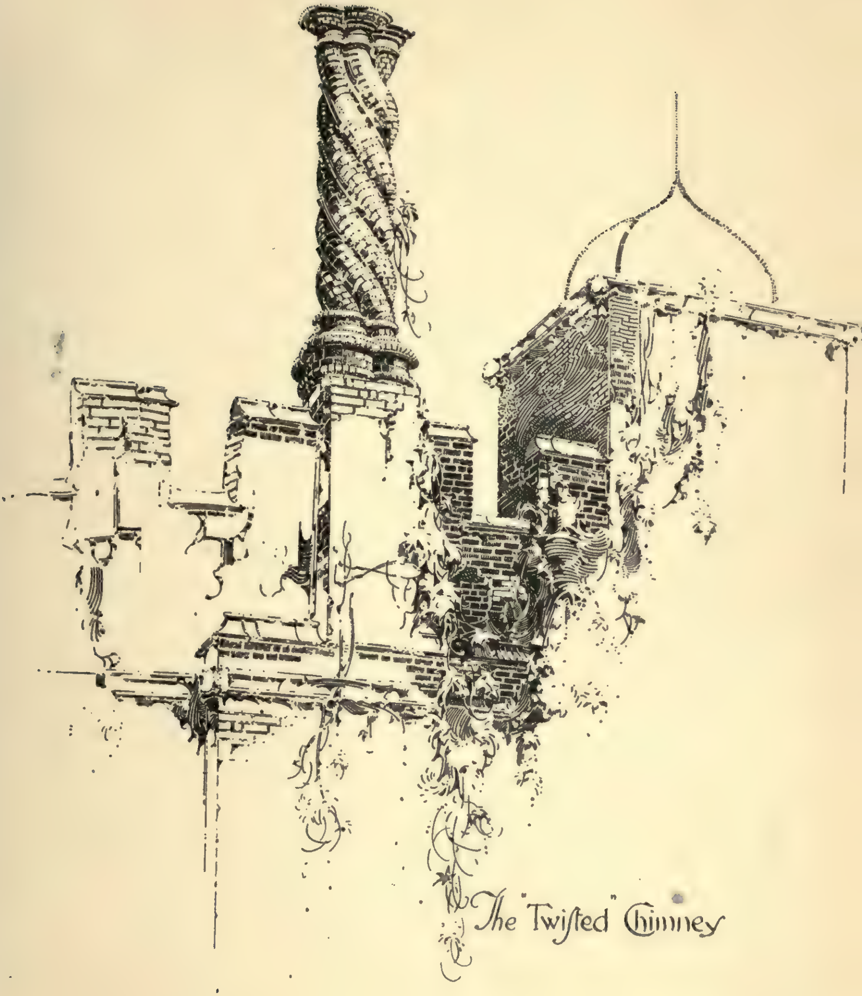
baggage, and all their artillery, were subject to the fatal delusion that everything could be remedied by something which they called an Association, and that by an agitation conducted on strictly lawful lines, a battle which had already been hopelessly lost might be turned into a victory. A more unfortunate thing for them than their own delusion was the presence on the outskirts of their party of a band of hangers-on, political camp-followers of the defeated host, consisting of retired and hipped colonels of Cromwell's army, an under-sheriff who had taken Government pay under false pretences, and a lot of broken-down merchants and tradesmen: butchers who had deserted meat for politics, bakers who had let their ovens cool while their brains grew heated, and who had most of them thrown up their hats and huzzaed before the scaffold at Whitehall. The result was what invariably happens under similar conditions. Agitation conducted on strictly lawful lines not being to these people's fancy, or moving too slowly to suit their feverish tastes, they decided to set up an Association of their own. This new Association was of course entirely outside the knowledge of the eminent men whom they still chose to speak of as their leaders, but to whom their undistinguished personalities were completely unknown.

One of these baulked patriots, by name Rumbold, happened to own the Rye House. At this time it was a considerable building enclosing a courtyard, and views are still to be seen of it which represent gabled fronts abutting on to the gate-house, and windows underneath them of early Tudor date.

Through one of these windows overlooking a by-lane from the main road Rumbold had seen, on set occasions in the year, the august yet unpretentious sight of the King returning from a race meeting accompanied by a very sparse guard. When Charles the Second went to Newmarket, he liked to go as nearly as he could (in days when the real thing was impossible) incognito. As he had no fear of his subjects and liked to get to a journey's end as soon as possible, he was not afraid of short cuts. It was a short cut issuing from the main road to Cambridge which brought the gay but unpretentious royal coach, escorted by a few life-guards on tired horses, under the inhospitable windows of Rumbold's brooding house. The gloomy owner would have seen that small procession pass many times without taking any particular notice of it, till the day came when Charles's well-practised stroke of dissimulation had put the Opposition on its back and Rumbold with it. In an instant the unappeased promptings of revenge turned a common sight into a portent. Rumbold saw the possibilities of a catastrophe in that small cavalcade returning so unostentatiously from Newmarket. He noticed, what he had never taken note of before, that its passage through the by-lane led it immediately under the walls of some of his own outhouses, and that these walls were already loopholed. He noticed also that at this point the road was so narrow that two carriages could not pass it abreast. As in a flash of infernal lightning, he saw Murder beckoning.

As the means through which a possibility might be turned into an accomplished and bloody fact seemed to call for some knowledge of arms of precision, and the best place to use them from, he had some guarded talk with two friends of his who happened to be old soldiers. One of them was a Colonel Rumsey, a discontented Republican officer who had distinguished himself in Portugal, as well as in the Civil War; the other was a certain Lieut.-Colonel Walcot, who had also had hopes of great things when the cause of Cromwell was the cause of his army. Rumbold knew that both these veterans had long suffered from the pangs of hopes deferred, and were furthermore smarting, as he himself was, from the recent rebuff given to their party by the diplomacy of Charles the Second. A few guarded preliminaries showed him that there was no need for talk to be guarded at all. At the first hint of the possibility he had seen from the window of the Rye House, both old soldiers pricked up attentive ears. A reconnaissance of the by-lane running from the main Cambridge road, made very likely after a solemn lunch, which had been preceded by an unusually long grace, turned under their distorted imaginations into a vision of Charles the Second's coach overturned, streaming with royal blood, and blotted from sight in a cloud of dust and the dense smoke of a volley fired point blank through those outhouse walls which were already loopholed. A short military inspection by the two military experts would have fixed the absolute site for the intended scene. The narrow passage (rather than by-way), with a thick hedge and ditch on the left hand, on the right the long range of buildings used for corn-chambers and stables, with several doors and windows looking on to the narrow passage hardly worthy of the name of road, to say nothing of the loopholes through which a great many men might shoot, were familiar factors to two soldiers who remembered Rupert's fiery forays and the bloody experiences of many a midnight raid. They saw in these surroundings of the Rye House every single factor which was needful for an absolutely perfect ambuscade. The military view of the matter was given with military decision. The Rye House Plot was on foot.

It would have been better for Rumbold, and for the plot also, if, now that military opinion had been got as to the fitness of the scene for the purpose, the military influence had been removed from it altogether, or had been confined to the two old soldiers who had so unguardedly given it voice. In plain truth, a cart overturned in the by-way, a signal given of the King's approach from the top of the gate-house by Rumbold, and Rumsey and Walcot crouched behind the loopholes of the stables or garden wall with musketoons carefully adjusted to an aim which had already been carefully marked, were the only three principals wanted to turn the scheme into an assassination, without any danger from outside. Fortunately for Charles the Second, the two old soldiers seem to have been inspired by those memories of the Civil War which have already been mentioned, but which were not in the least helpful to the enterprise in hand. Military meddling on a large scale commenced. A small army corps had to be enrolled. All sorts of guns were necessary: when all that was


The "Twisted" Chimney

RYE HOUSE

wanted was for one man to stand behind a wall and shoot straight. Blunderbusses, muskets, pistols, carabinests, were hidden in boats under coals and oysters, and carried into the Rye House from the river Lea. At least forty men were enrolled in a plot which could have been carried out by three, and which began to assume the dangerous dimensions of a small rising. Misdirected military ardour, growing by what it fed on, turned the shooting of a man from behind a wall into a sort of field-day. All sorts of unnecessary dispositions were made, and, what was worse, committed to paper. Four men were to be sent towards Newmarket to find out the colour of the King's coach. Others were to bring news of how many men formed his escort, though it was a perfectly well-established fact that six was the limit. These discoveries made, everybody was to be in readiness in the house and yard to rush out on horseback or on foot at a given signal. Some dressed as labourers were to overthrow a cart: others to fight the six life-guards who would be riding on tired horses. Others were to shoot the coachman. Others were to shoot the postilions. Finally, some one was to shoot the King. Congratulations were exchanged on the completion of this over-elaborated programme, and there was some promiscuous drinking at the neighbouring inn. It was called the King's Arms in those days, and was kept by a man named Shepherd, who had also promised to do his best.

Whether Shepherd's "best" did not take the form of saddling his nag one dark night and riding up to London to lay an Information is not certain. But preparations so out of proportion cannot have escaped the notice of the countryside. Somebody took too much wine. A stranger put his head into one of the rooms of the King's Arms where some of the conspirators were drinking, and withdrew it at once with deep apologies. The usual feeling of some unseen danger menacing fell upon the guilty crew, and one of them named Keiling, who was deeply implicated, thought it time to consult the authorities. Proclamations were at once issued, but at first only one man was taken. The others fled in all directions like a covey of scared partridges. But a common desire possessed them more wholly than their late desire to kill the King, and that was to save their own necks by turning King's evidence. Keiling, West, Rumsey, and Shepherd were the first four who caught the Judge's eye in this race for Infamy, and their united testimony, fully spiced with unnecessary lies, soon sent Colonel Walcot to Tyburn, though he tried to prove that at the very time that he was supposed to be trying to make Charles the Second his victim, he was himself being made a victim by the gout.

Little ingenuity was needed by the Crown lawyers to bring the Rye House plotters to the scaffold. The whole of their ability and that of the presiding Judge was spent in an infamous attempt, which ought never to have been successful, to fasten the guilt of the would-be assassins on several eminent men who might never have heard of the Rye House at all, if they hadn't had to read about it in their own indictment. The utmost extent of harm that Lord Essex, Lord Russell, Hampden, and Algernon Sidney had done was to form themselves into an Association. They still believed that a Parliamentary opposition to the triumphant Court was possible, without running the risk of the axe or the halter. Sir George Jeffreys soon undeceived them on this point. He showed the jury in the clearest possible way, and in the face of the clearest possible sworn evidence, that two distinct things, the Association and the Rye House Plot, were one and the same thing, and that by the laws of England they could not possibly be otherwise; and he left the final decision of the case to the public hangman.

Such is the plain story of the Rye House Plot. Its moral can be easily drawn, and it can also be easily applied to other conspiracies which proved equally abortive, since the reason for their respective failures may be traced to the same simple cause.

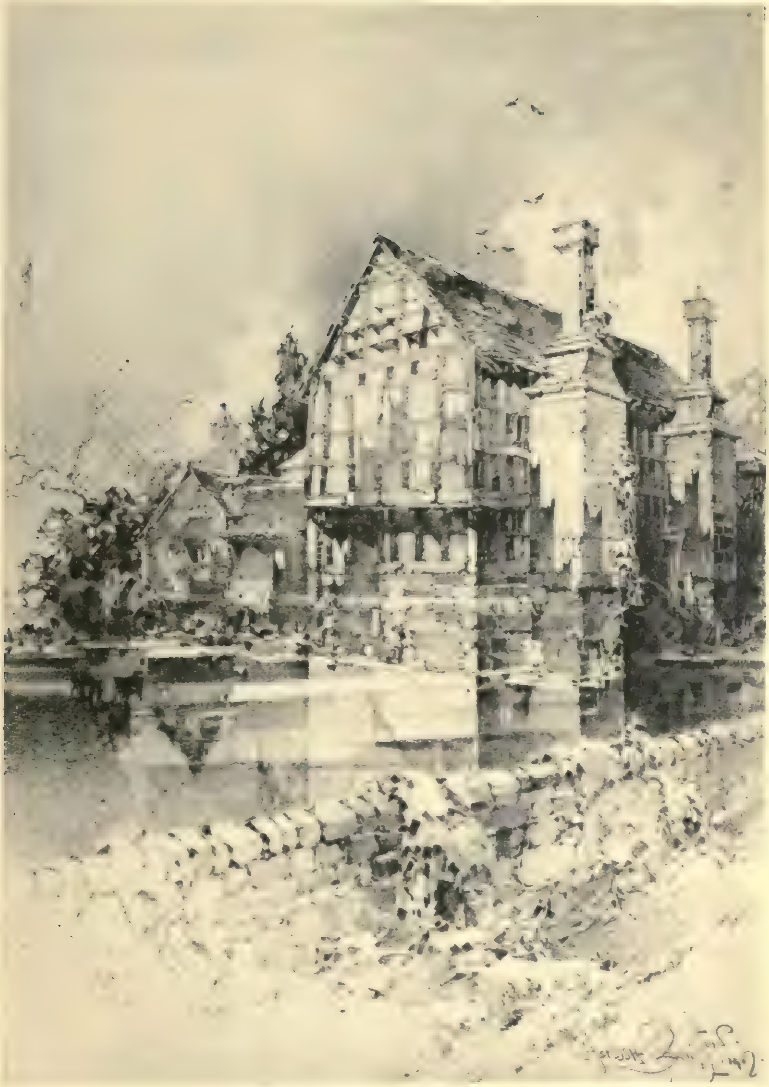
This, in ten words, is the disinclination of the originator to take all the risk. The successful regicide takes his own life in his own hand, and has no need to share his views with other people. His unsuccessful brother is, fortunately for Kings, Emperors, and Presidents, less selfish. He disdains keeping all the glory to himself—or the danger. His first impulse on conceiving a scheme of the kind is to get his friends and acquaintances to join it. His excuse is that his object will be more easily attained by linking all (for his country's good, of course) in the bonds of a common danger. But the real motive which underlies the move, and which is probably concealed from the plotter by that never-ceasing action of self-deception which so confounds human nature, is to make his own escape more probable in the event of discovery. If hounds or pursuivants are to be set loose, there is more chance for one hare if other hares are set on foot: and more chance for one conspirator if seven or eight other conspirators are riding for dear life into different parts of the country. The one conspirator mentioned is of course the originator himself. The application of this axiom to practical events will account for the failure of the Rye House Plot as well as for most others in history. When Rumbold saw opportunity beckoning him through the windows of the Rye House, he had the manipulation of the plot in his own hand. So close did his victim pass to this man's loopholed garden wall that he could have shot him at sight, if he had been ready to risk the inevitable consequences. But what Rumbold was not prepared to take in his own hand was his own life. The two Republican officers had to be called in to share the glory or the peril which might ensue. If one conspirator would have been enough, three would have been ample. But the two new recruits also saw safety in the increasing of responsibilities. If accidents happened, there would be more chance for them too if thirty-eight other comrades were flying in different directions. Hence the enrolment of the little-needed forty. That unnecessary enrolment turned a promising plot into a failure. It is ever thus, fortunately, with conspirators from their childhood's unhappy hour.

It would be ungracious to take leave of the Rye House without acknowledging the debt due to a proprietor who has had the penetration to make a pleasure haunt more profitable by associating it with an event of history; and who, disdaining the vulgar advertisement of the hoardings, has got a double patronage for his establishment, by associating dancing saloons and merry-go-rounds with the Memories of the Past. To the attractions mentioned must be added (during the summer months) the solace to be got by sun-baked Londoners from the smooth expanses of well-kept lawns, and from flower-beds filled with quite a profusion of really beautiful flowers. But even these are not the limits set to an ingenuity which in an untiring search for fresh joys has made a final dive and discovered Dungeons. Most moated houses relied on their moat for the purpose of withdrawing undesirable people from active participation in current events. Under what is left of the Rye House other forms of mediæval removal are in startling evidence. Their origin may be doubtful, but nervous people had better view them after lunch.

XX

BIRTSMORTON

THE great dining-parlour of this fine Worcestershire moated house tells the story of the place clearly to all who have a taste for Heraldry. The walls of this room, richly wainscoted with carved oak, speak of the wealth and comfort of past proprietors; of their hospitable habits; of their custom, always of an afternoon, of taking their wine in surroundings worthy of its fine flavour. To add dignity to these symposiums, an heraldic chimneypiece displays the architecture of the fourteenth century and the arms of the original founders. The walls shine with the emblazoned shields of the numerous families allied to them. The room is indeed a sort of Domestic Heralds' College set in the heart of this old moated house where Kings, Esquires of the body, Deputies of Calais, and Governors of New York have lived and loved and made merry, but whose once noble and hospitable uses have fallen into adversity. The great hall is now used as a farm kitchen. The noble banqueting room of 50 feet long by 24 feet wide is now devoted to the making of cheeses. Birtsmorton is a great house fallen from its high estate.



BIRTSMORTON COURT

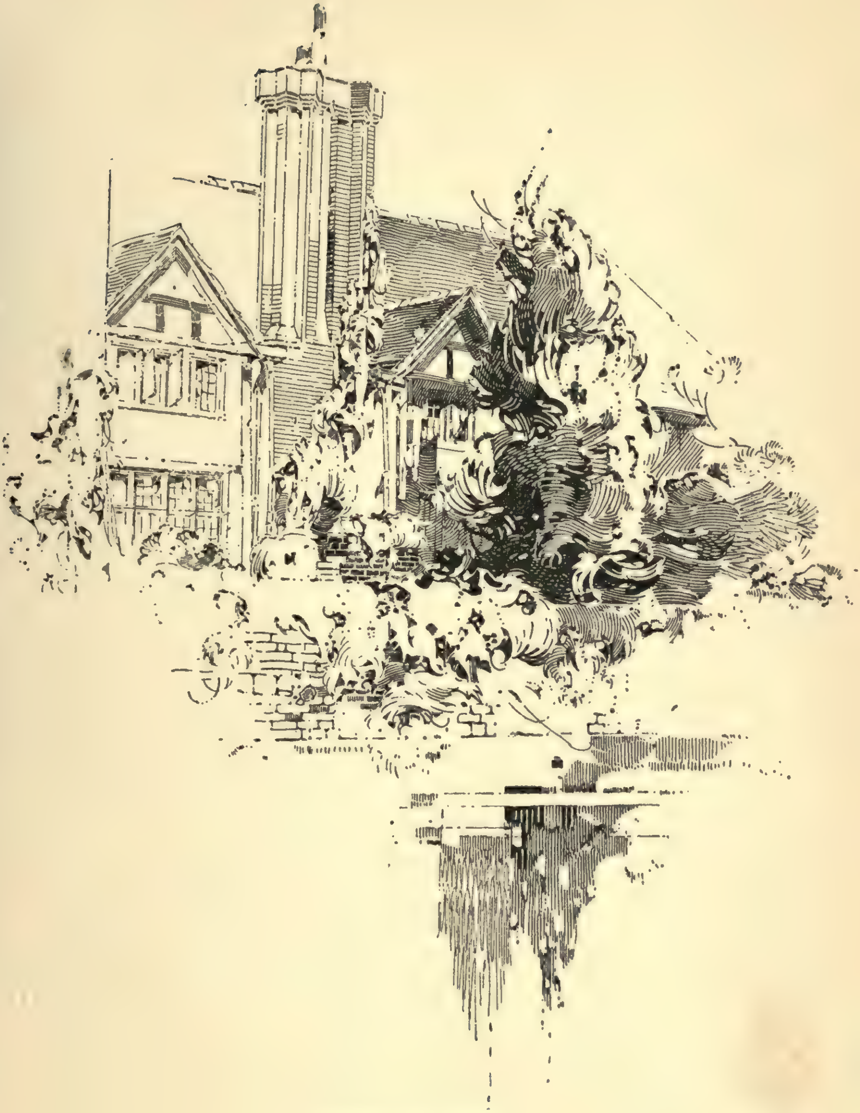
The entrance to this home of past splendour faded, and of noble and chivalric owners long since dead and gone, is over a moat which is one of the widest in the country, and through a lofty stone gateway with embattled walls. The lofty ornamented chimneys are an especially picturesque feature of this timbered house, which must have been built before Arthur Tudor married Catharine of Aragon. Its open court is guarded by a relic of those days departed, in the form of a great oaken door, shattered it is true by the assaults of time and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, but still showing in its nail-studded strength indelible traces of its being the original one. Other proofs of a long and changeful past are to be seen everywhere in the building. The great room once used for banquets, and in which cheeses are now made with scrupulous cleanliness and dispatch, tells, in its chimney, richly ornamented in stucco, the certain story of royal favour. The Tudor rose and the fleur-de-lis are seen in compartments.

In the days when the *Letters of Junius* were still stirring England to the heart, and John Wilkes was fighting the battle of reporters in the Commons, and sneaking down Fleet Street alleys to avoid the tipstaffs,—in this very year in which our great modern newspapers, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, the *Morning Herald*, and the *Times*, came into being,—the death of Lady Judith Coote, only daughter of Richard second Earl of Bellamont, put an end to an unbroken ownership which had ruled at Birtsmorton Court since the days of Henry the

Sixth. Cornwall gave Birtsmorton its first owner, in the person of John Nanfan, or Nanphant, who came from Tresize in that county of legend and tin mines and wrestlers, and probably rebuilt the house. Cornishman as he was, John Nanfan was something of a wrestler himself. He at all events made himself busy in other matters than building. Nor did his love for his new and beautiful Worcestershire home prevent him from making his strenuous presence felt,—not only in his own native county, but in any other part of the civilized globe, where the King was to be served, to the accompaniment of a proper profit. This last consideration was a vital one, and rose even superior to loyalty. For the Nanfans were throughout their whole history consistent amassers not to say grabbers of wealth, and it seems an irony of circumstance that a house which once sheltered a race so grasping, eminent, and rich, should have come to be put at last to such homely purposes. Still there is a profit attached to cheese-making, as the Nanfans would soon have found out, so Birtsmorton is perhaps not altogether unfittingly tenanted. Its present owners are as busy turning over money made out of cheeses, as their predecessors the Nanfans were busy with county matters out of which money could be made. John, the probable builder of Birtsmorton, was twice Sheriff of Cornwall, and used the experience gained from an officially pushing position, to push himself forward for the Governorship of Jersey and Guernsey. He got the post—and also its Collectorship of Customs. Money and John Nanfan were never far apart.

His son Richard followed sedulously in those determined and accumulating footsteps, and was indeed so actively engaged in gleaning and garnering in other places that he could not have been in residence at the family seat for long periods at a time. The year 1485 would, however, have seen him there; for in this first year of Henry the Seventh, Richard Nanfan was made Esquire of the new King's body, and the Tudor rose and the fleur-de-lis on the banqueting-hall chimney are said to memorialize a royal visit. Royal favour at all events followed hard after the second owner of Birtsmorton, and with no unvarying strides. It gave him frequent grants of stewardships which must have made him a very rich man, and it impelled him presently, with a royal and gentle push on no resisting shoulder, into further paths of ambition and pay. Results soon manifested themselves which must have made the Christmas of 1488 at Birtsmorton a merry one. For the hospitality of the host would have been heightened by the knowledge that four days before he had been elected for a mission (diplomatic) into Spain and Portugal, with the promise of a Knighthood before setting out. This favour granted, and two companions for the voyage having also been chosen in the persons of a Doctor Savage and Roger Macado the Norroy King-of-Arms, the party left Southampton early in 1489, in a boat in which no diplomatist of to-day would dare to cross the English Channel. The good fortune of Sir Richard, however, favoured him even at sea, embarked though he was in so frail a craft. Perhaps he had craft enough of his own, and it served for ballast. He at all events had a fair voyage, and on 12th March an interview at Medina del Campo linked this story of Birtsmorton Court and its owners with the history of Ferdinand and Isabella. Like everything Richard took in hand, this diplomatic meeting was a success. Perhaps to celebrate its success, the diplomat took his honours and his courage in both hands, and came home in another leviathan of the deep, laden with salt this time, and weighing 20 tons!

Soon afterwards he attained to Calais. This was a coveted post, and, as such, would long have presented itself to Richard's mind's eye. Cavendish's account, however, of what he was doing there is rather vague, not to say disquieting. He simply remarks that Sir Richard Nanfan "had a great room in the place." Unkindly people or candid friends suggested that this cryptic utterance was intended to convey the fact that he was only Treasurer of the place; and it must be acknowledged that Sir Richard's own proclivities, to say nothing of his father's activity at the Jersey Customs, at first sight favour the possibility. It seems certain, however, that he was Deputy as well, and letters of Henry the Seventh show that as late as 1500 Richard was still carrying out his responsible duties at the only French seaport which remained in English hands, except one small one which need not be taken into historic account. At this period our hero is caught at his official labours in a very characteristic attitude. He had been accused of being Treasurer, and not Deputy. And now, as Deputy, we have a singular picture of



BIRTSMORTON COURT

him listening at the Treasurer's door to catch that worthy out in a treasonable conversation. The worthy's name was Sir Hugh Conway, and John Flamank sent over an account to England of what Sir Richard had heard him saying. It was not a very savoury business, but the matter was rounded by a rope and a cauldron of boiling pitch, and through the smoke pouring from the latter Sir Richard is seen peering with dubious air. He had the price of that catastrophe, we may be sure, in his pocket!

His return to Birtsmorton almost immediately followed this diplomatic exercise of his ears. He came back to the old Worcestershire house accompanied by honours, dignities, and much public pelf. It is likely, having strong religious views, as well as firm financial ones, that he also came back to it accompanied by his chaplain. Such an ecclesiastical escort would give Wolsey as a visitor to Birtsmorton, if he did not in fact live there through some of the remaining five years of Sir Richard's life. He had been his chaplain through the greater part of the Calais adventures, and very likely assisted at the listening at the door episode. Sir Richard, with his usual penetration, saw signs of budding greatness in the Ipswich tradesman's son who was to be in future Lord High Chancellor of England and Archbishop of York. He gave an opening for his genius by introducing him to the King. He made him one of his executors. Then having no further diplomatic triumphs to gain in this world, he died in January 1506. He left a great deal of money, a wife who died four years after him childless, and an illegitimate son.

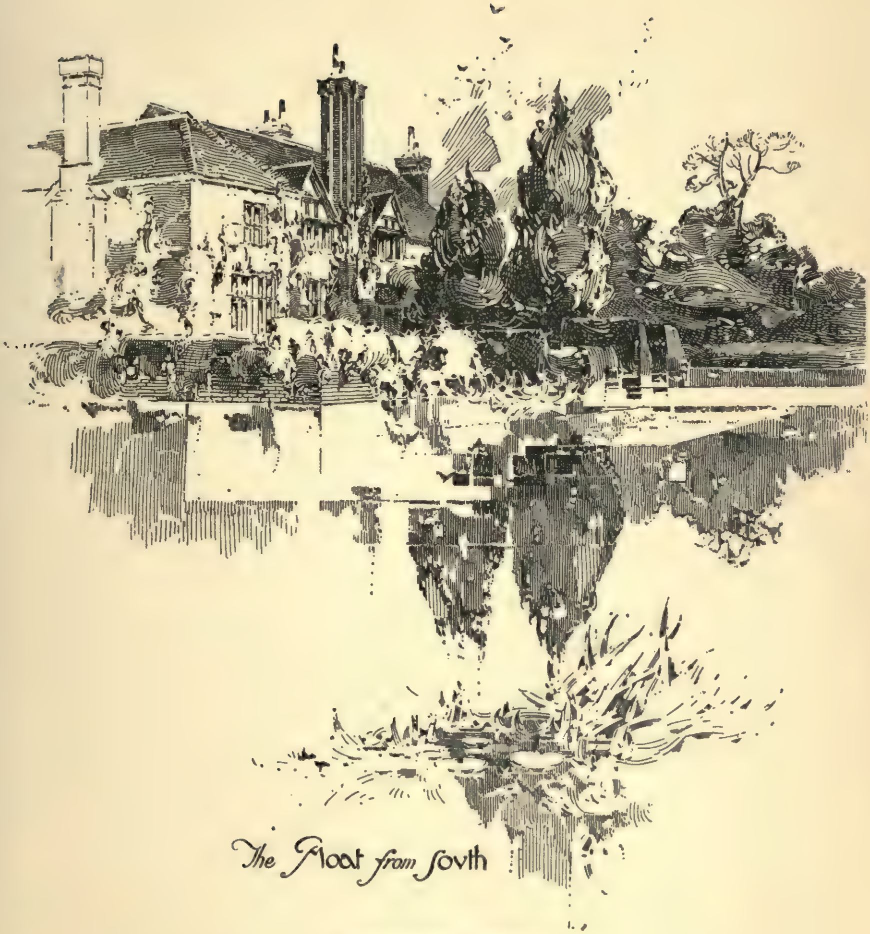
The history of this son, whose name was John, is properly surrounded with mystery. Two things, however, are certain about him. He accompanied his father on the diplomatic mission to Spain, and on his death succeeded to the Worcestershire estates. They had by this time become very large, and the various owners continued to show the same strenuous interest in county affairs. That the family push of a certain Bridges Nanfan landed him in Parliament as Member for the City of Worcester is not so important a matter as the fact that he left behind him a daughter who was also an heiress. Her name was Catharine, and she grew up to girlhood guarded by the Birtsmorton moat, which must often have reflected her pretty face, and her dangerously inviting fortune in the spendthrift days of the Merry Monarch. Many adventurous blades must have attempted beauty so richly dowered. Her father's Parliamentary duties must have brought her with him to town for a talk, and Whitehall and Paul's Walk must have sounded the name of the Worcestershire heiress. If toasts told anything, London intended to have her. Ireland, however, eventually snatched the tempting matrimonial morsel from the metropolis's open jaws; and in the stirring year when Shaftesbury lay dying, and conspirators were huddling and whispering round an old fireplace in the Rye House, Catharine Nanfan threw away national preferences, and gave her hand and fortune, and the halls and courts and clustering chimneys of Birtsmorton with them, to Coote Richard, only son of Richard Coote, Lord Coloony in the peerage of Ireland.

An increased impetus was lent to the already sufficiently strenuous character of the Nanfans by this marriage, which added a noble shield to the emblazoned ones already hanging in the Birtsmorton great parlour. With all the impetuosity of his race, Lord Coloony flung himself into affairs. Affairs were lively at the time: the young peer did not detract from their tendency, by showing from the first pronounced Orange views. His devotion to the young cause of William the Third was indeed shown so vigorously both in Parliament and in the campaign in Ireland, that he was attainted by James the Second's Irish Parliament (then sitting where many people suppose it ought to be sitting now). The gratitude of the victorious Dutchman, however, soon put matters right. The attainted Lord Coloony was made Treasurer and Receiver to Queen Mary (an exquisite family touch seeming to show that even if they only got it through marriage, the Lords of Birtsmorton must have control of the cash), and on the 2nd of November of the same year he was created Earl of Bellamont in the peerage of Ireland.

But this newly created Irish Earl's devotion to the cause of William is not the most striking episode in his connection with Birtsmorton Court. This will be found to lie in an appointment carrying with it what would at first sight seem to be small romantic possibilities. Events, however, were to negative this view. For Lord Bellamont's succession, his appointment as Governor of New England, carrying with it a mission expressly directed to put down piracy, at once connects this old Worcestershire manor-house, its clustered chimneys, dreaming moat, grey and decorous history, with no less a piratical notoriety than the famous Captain Kidd. On this quiet scene of Lancastrian Tudor and Orange diplomatic triumphs a full-blooded pirate appears. Not literally, be it understood, nor is it suggested. It cannot unfortunately be suggested that this bold and buccaneering presence was ever seen even in the neighbourhood of the house in the flesh. He may well be supposed to haunt it, however, by believers in ghosts, since his precipitate departure from this vale of tears (which took place on 23rd May 1701, at no less a classic spot than Execution Dock) was directly due to the contemporary owner of Birtsmorton's diplomatic activity. Curiously enough, this rascal owed his sudden rise to Lord Bellamont, equally as he owed to him his disagreeably precipitate fall. And between the years 1695 and 1700 his name and doings must have contaminated many a letter which came to the Worcestershire Birtsmorton moated house from that New England, as it was then called, where the absent head of the family had taken up his appointment as Governor. These letters concerning Kidd and his doings must have made stirring reading for the Birtsmorton folk. Visions of the Jolly Roger, merchantmen scuttled in far-off seas, passengers and crew walking the plank, decks aswim with blood, to say nothing of immense treasure piratically borne off from those horrid scenes of loot and murder, must have passed before the amazed eyes of the honest stay-at-home Worcestershire folk like a succession of tremendous marine nightmares. The twisted chimneys of the old house itself must almost have inclined themselves to listen to the tales, and the broad moat for a moment or two forgotten to murmur. The inhabitants of the house at all events had cause to read these tidings about Kidd with an amazement in which perturbation had a share. For these murderous commercial successes of the buccaneer were entirely due to the absent Governor of New England's lack of foresight. With each triumph of the pirate they expected to hear of Earl Bellamont's recall. Nor is it certain that such a disgrace would not have fallen on the house, if the noble proprietor had not been careful enough to connect five of the greatest official names with his own (and Kidd's) in an extraordinary scheme.

The facts of the case are so simple that he who runs may read them, and he will also smile. Earl Bellamont, especially sent out to New England to suppress piracy, finds piracy more rampant even than was supposed. He advertises for a proper man to put down the outrage on civilization. A man of good repute in the Colony, named Robert Livingstone, answers the advertisement for putting down piracy, by appearing in the Governor's presence leading a disguised pirate by the hand. He introduces him as Captain Kidd and as a man fit for the work. Kidd produced some sort of references, but Bellamont found something in this new-found agent for restoring the peace of the seas which made him hesitate to give him the command of a King's ship—it was probably something peculiarly villainous in the aspirant's eye. A King's ship not being found a suitable stage for the display of Captain Kidd's capacities as a seaman, a novel and most extraordinary expedient was hit upon by Earl Bellamont. He decided on putting down piracy by a piece of company promoting, and went to England with the disguised pirate. Birtsmorton would now have seen its noble owner again; its silent walls may have listened to preliminary or final fiscal details: and a subscription list in due course appeared in the form of a State document which showed the Governor of New England, the Lord of the Admiralty, the Lord Chancellor, a Secretary of State, and a Lord Justice, writing their names under that of a disguised pirate for the purpose of building a privateer which he himself was to command. The money was found so quickly that the *Adventure*, Captain Kidd commanding, sailed for New York in the following year. Bellamont may have gone in her as a passenger, or returned by a later boat to official duties—to his singular conception of official duties.

Kidd at once began his. After raising his complement of hands to 150, and secretly stowing on board a novel kind of royal ensign in the form of a black flag adorned with a skull and cross-bones, he sailed for Madagascar, as the chief centre of piratical misdoings, and for two years his noble band of fellow-subscribers heard nothing of him at all. Then astonishing rumours began to filter through to London. Dispatch followed dispatch, till discomforting rumour grew into astounding certainty, and the subscribers for a new plan for putting down piracy on the high seas learnt that


The Moat from South

BIRTSMORTON COURT

their acting agent abroad, instead of destroying pirates, was a pirate of the deepest possible dye himself. The consternation of a syndicate who were all members of the Government at this news may be better imagined than described. The venerable walls of Birtsmorton Court must almost have fallen into a moat equally disturbed. Their absent owner, seeing that he had put his eggs into the wrong basket, now hastily abandoned company promoting for the safety of the seas, and sent proclamations post-haste all over the world announcing that his late fellow-promoter was a pirate pure and simple, and not a city financier. As the gentleman referred to was at the moment at some place on the high seas (longitude not known), setting fire to passing ships, and making every man, woman, and child on board them walk the plank, for the purpose of booty, what good would come of the proclamation did not patently appear.

Strangely enough, the good came in a form least expected, in the person of the much-wanted Kidd himself, and in a letter written by him to Lord Bellamont saying that he was an innocent man. He received an answer that if this was the case he had better come to Boston and pay a call. Impudence or innocence prompted him to take advantage of this courtesy on the 1st of June 1699. Irons were clapped upon him at once. But his native effrontery did not desert him even in this new form of a meeting of directors. He had his tale to tell, and he told it with an air of outraged innocence that would have done credit to one of our modern absconding financiers. He said that no act of piracy had been committed, but that he had been overpowered by a mutinous crew, though he had thrown a leaden implement of commerce at one of the mutineers, and fatally wounded him in the head. Asked where the capital of the company was (in the form of the good ship *Adventure*), he said that she had become unseaworthy and had been destroyed; and that the few men who had remained loyal were on their way home in a ship named the *Quedo Merchant*, a richly laden ship of 400 tons, which had been captured under French colours when touching at Hispaniola. He added that it was there that he had heard that he had been proclaimed a pirate, and had indignantly come on to Boston by a small ship. Having heard something about a cargo of £70,000 being on board the *Quedo Merchant*, Lord Bellamont was not unnaturally anxious to know where that good ship was. But Kidd knew nothing whatever about this. In the words of our more modern financier, he said, "No, you don't!" and the *Quedo Merchant* was never heard of afterwards.

Half a year having been spent in a fruitless search for these missing assets (some small part of the treasure known to have been buried in Gardiner's Island was never recovered, nor that larger portion believed by present-day experts to have been buried somewhere else), Captain Kidd was sent in irons to London to take his trial. But here this skilful mariner for the first time in his life was hopelessly at sea. He attempted through friends to prove in the House of Commons that his fellow-directors were "in the know," especially the Lord Chancellor of England ("Forgive me, shade of Lord Somers"). At the Old Bailey he said that he had sailed under sealed orders which Lord Bellamont and the Lords of the Admiralty had, after prevailing upon him to let them have a look at them, snatched out of his hand. On 23rd May 1701 he was hung at Execution Dock with several of his companions. Two months before, Lord Bellamont had died at New York, and had been honoured with a public funeral.

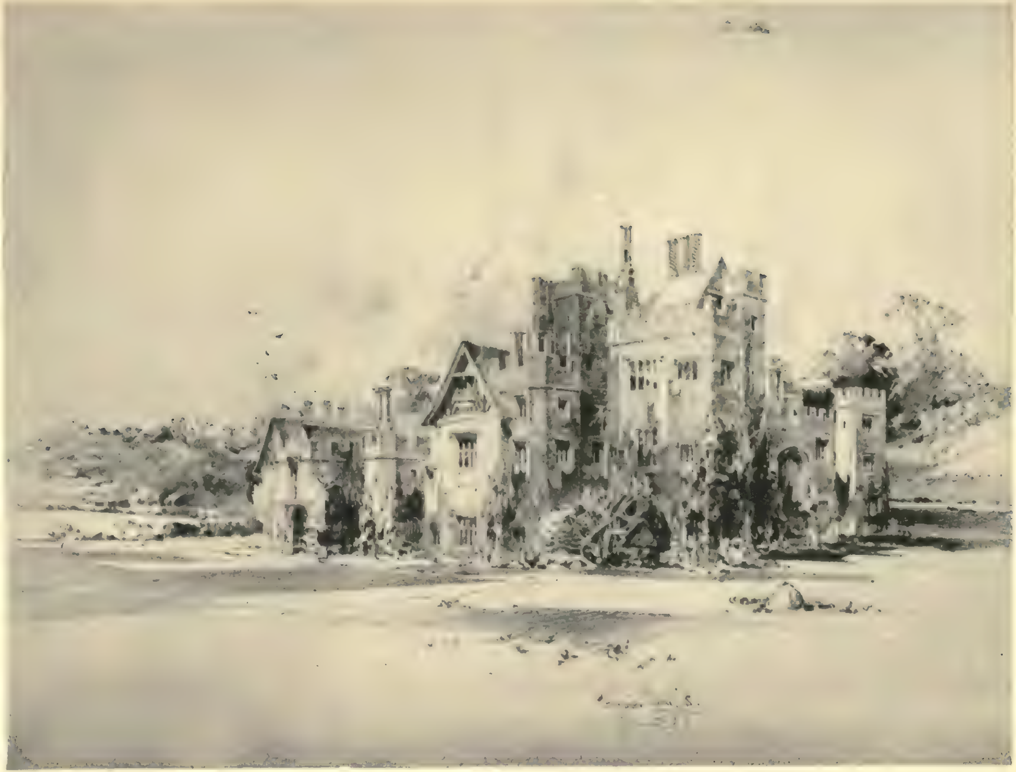
His widowed Countess, the beautiful heiress of Charles the Second's days, continued to live at Birtsmorton in company with a sorrow which did not long prove unconsolable. It would seem that either grief became her, or that her large fortune looked more tempting in its widowed weeds; for she twice afterwards entered into the bonds of holy matrimony, and showed both to Admiral Caldwell and Edmund Pytts, Esquire, that mourning can be made seductive, by marrying them both (one after the other). This last tempting of fortune gave Birtsmorton Court its first Lord Mayor of London. As Sir Edmund Pytts rode through the bawling streets in his gilded coach the quarrel with America was beginning, and the Prime Minister was losing a Colony by reading its dispatches. The Colonists liked to govern themselves, and no Minister had paid the least attention to anything they put in writing till Grenville took the reins of office. His excessive studiousness overturned the coach. With civic dignities now thick upon it, the long story of Birtsmorton and the worthies who lived there draws to its close. Ambassador! Governor of Calais! Esquire of the Body to a Tudor King! future Lord Chancellor of England! Archbishop of York! England's Representative in the England across the Sea! Lord Mayor of London! here are a list of titles and honours, whose holders have been shown crossing and recrossing the bridge over the Birtsmorton moat, and whose arms emblazoned in the great parlour bear witness to the pomp and splendour of a courtly past. But a plain and simple citizen who did more service to the State than all the inmates and possessors of the old house already mentioned has yet to be added to the list of its worthies. In 1771 the death of Lady Julia Cooke, only daughter of Richard second Earl of Bellamont, put an end to an unbroken succession, and the property passed out of the family. But the year before a boy had been born at Birtsmorton (during a temporary tenancy of the place by his father), who, when he grew to manhood, was destined to write his name larger on his country's history than all those stately holders of the past had done by shields shining with emblazonments. "The Reciprocity of Duties Bill," which made the Port of London the clearing-house of the world, was a richer gift to England than the first Nanfan's diplomatic journey to Spain, or his son's pocketings and eavesdroppings at Calais. The Sliding Scale duties on Corn was the first step towards that Free Trade which now appears to be not, as it was always supposed to be, an unmixed blessing, but which may yet be set in a higher grade of achievement for a country's good than Bellamont's martial caperings in Ireland for William of Orange, or his final capture of a successful pirate whom he had himself fatuously enlisted in the country's service. Finally, the patient and unceasing forwarding of the slow birth of Machinery and Steam is a work which will outlive heraldic chimneys and the arms of Birtsmorton's first founders.

Huskisson was born in this house.

XXI

COMPTON WINYATES

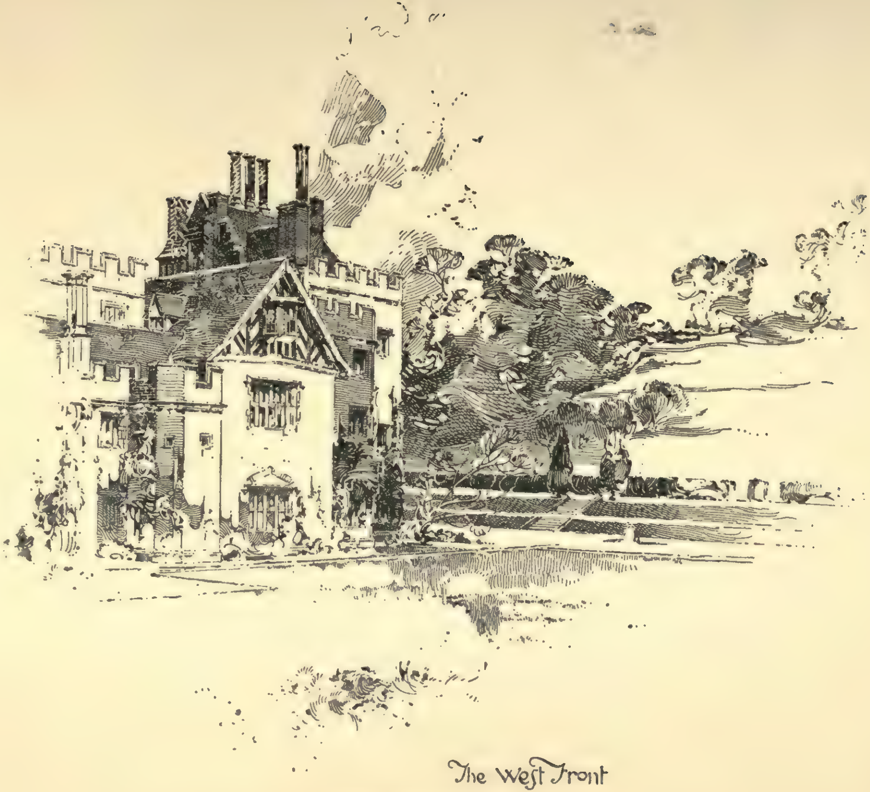
THERE is extant a long and formal letter of Lord Burleigh's written in those Elizabethan days when conspirators were supposed to be busy and seminary priests were, according to their own view, trying to teach England how to behave, and according to the view of the authorities, trying to help the conspirators, bearing the singular heading of "Compton in the Hole." This letter was written from Compton Winyates. The address perfectly describes the site of a moated house which is the pride of Warwickshire, and which can be almost stumbled upon before it is seen. In so deep a seclusion indeed does Compton Winyates lie, that Mr. Howitt, the well-known antiquary, in one of his *Visits to Remarkable Places*, had great difficulty in finding this remarkable place at all. No matter from which quarter approached, the house, surrounded by its woods and ponds, remains to the last moment hidden The genial and entertaining author above named, who after long ramblings over English counties was not averse to sitting down before a punch-bowl, approached the place from Edgehill, which lies four miles off. And the scene of the first battle



COMPTON WINYATES

of the Great Civil War is a particularly appropriate point of departure for a visit to a house so more than ordinarily rich in Cavalier memories. Other memories, too, than those of Charles the First's time are stirred by this route, though like all good ways it is a difficult one to follow, and the directions of the local inhabitants are decidedly bad. No sooner has Edge Hill, with its associations of undecided battle, been left behind, than another warlike memorial comes into view. The figure of a red horse roughly cut in the turf of a hillside is a modern copy of an older model, but it serves to remind wayfarers of the battle of Towton. Pictures at once present themselves to the pedestrian of that desperate fray. Neville is seen swearing on his sword cross to conquer or die; killing his war-horse before the eyes of his foot-soldiers, who had begun to give way before the Lancastrian attack, in order to unite them with him in an equal danger, and to inspire them with some needful portion of his own desperate valour. Towton was not one of those "bloodiest battles in history" that we heard of during the Boer War. But it was one of the bloodiest battles of the Wars of the Roses. A hundred and twenty thousand men fought hand to hand for six hours, for nothing in particular, and in a snowstorm, on that tremendous day. When the day went down on that scene of carnage, Edward's herald, in a very indifferent light for making a list of killed and wounded, counted twenty thousand Lancastrian corpses in the fields about Tadcaster. Here we have the horrors of war exposed to us with a vengeance! A more sociable memory is recalled by the sight of a large house perched on the top of a neighbouring hill. This house was once a celebrated inn, though its days are long since gone. But its picturesque name, "Sun Rising," was as familiar to our forefathers as household words in the meridian of "Coaching Days and Ways." The time seems now to have come to leave off thinking about the desperate hand-to-hand battles of the Wars of the Roses, and the almost equally desperate journeys of crack coaches timed over great lengths of road at twelve and a half miles an hour, including stoppages, and to try to find the way to avoid digressions, and at the same time the way to Compton Winyates. Mr. Howitt, on his visit, was told to take a footpath leading over a little hill, and to keep a mill standing on the top of it to his right. But the footpath faded to nothing, and the traveller was making for the mill to get some further advice, when he saw a stile on his left hand; he got over it, and his genial face was at once suffused with a lively satisfaction. There lay Compton Winyates at his feet, hiding its mysteries in a lonely valley.

A feeling came over Mr. Howitt at this welcome sight which he modestly says he does not know how to describe, but which he presently proceeds to describe very well; and his sympathetic account of his first view of this Warwickshire moated house should be read by all those interested in these homes of a vanished world. Meanwhile it is not too much to say (exaggeration carefully barred) that the sight of Compton Winyates makes the traveller stand still. He seems to have come suddenly upon an enchanted place, to have got a peep at the Castle of Avalon.


The West Front

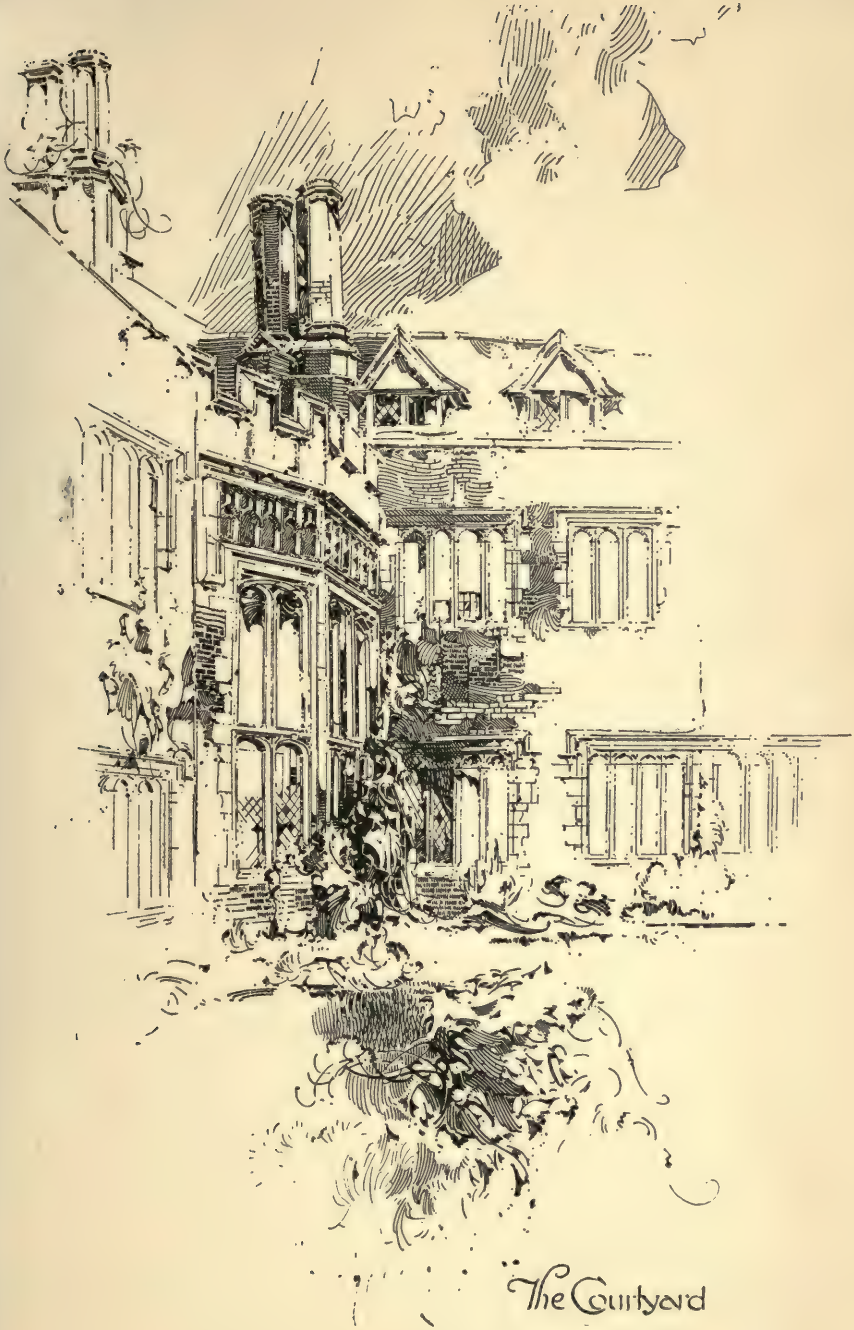
COMPTON WINYATES

If things imaginative held their proper sway in this world devoted to materialism, political Mumbo Jumbos, and motor cars, King Arthur, Ogeir, and Palladin should be housed with Morgana in this moated house, lying there in the solitary valley, and wrapped in the mysterious stillness of the world of dreams. Faint murmurs of the Infinitely Distant Land come borne upon the breeze. Charmed magic casements should be seen opening in this home of a fairy world forlorn.

Though, however, the charmed casements of the poet who strangely enough thought that his name which will never die was "writ in water," no longer form a part of Compton Winyates' treasures, it has its full share of equipments hardly less mysterious, which charge it from floor to ceiling with an air of secrecy peculiarly its own. Such a succession of sliding panels, secret hiding-places, masked entrances, delusive stairways designed deliberately for the purpose of deluding, now leading the intruder up one flight of stairs, now down two, only to lead him up three again, and land him finally in some part of the building to which he had not the faintest desire to penetrate, are not to be found within the four walls of any other moated house in England. Since the ruthless hand of a blind iconoclasm pulled down Henlip Hall for the edification of unthinking posterity (after first turning it into a girls' school), there is no house to be seen which speaks so eloquently as Compton Winyates does, of the constantly surrounding perils from which our naive forefathers had to protect themselves in times of civil war, religious persecution, and internecine strife. The by-ways, the secret stairs, and the underground passages of Compton Winyates are eloquent explanation of the necessity of the moated house when times were troublous, and a trembling Sheriff's tremulous "Posse Comitatus" inadequately represented the police. But a moat of brimming water drawn round the family seat was not safeguard enough when every man's hand was against his neighbour's; when armed and ruffianly camp-followers hung about the heels of a long-drawn-out civil war; and the precious heritage of our civil and religious liberty was being brought to a slow and painful birth. The moat, as a first line of defence, was well enough in its way. But preparation had to be made for the reception of unwelcome visitors whose audacity or cunning had enabled them to cross it. The interior of these houses had also to be prepared against sudden or insidious assault. Means of protection or escape were accordingly provided against an enemy, whether marauder, pursuivant, priest-hunter, or near neighbour on murder bent, even when he was already in the citadel. Hence the carefully designed succession of builders' puzzles to be seen at Compton Winyates and elsewhere, but at Compton Winyates in an ordered and subtle profusion. Totally unexpected assaults may have been made on undesirable visitors from many of these masked doorways. Pursuivants have often got tired of running up and down false stairs leading to nowhere after their elusive prey. An oubliette just outside a drawing-room door has opened and shut before now, without making any further comment on the matter. The moat at Compton Winyates may hold dark secrets.

Strangely enough (for a house whose interior is so strongly suggestive of treasons, stratagems, and spoils), a two days' siege in the Civil War is the only violent event recorded in its story. The usual Conspirators' Room is shown, and was probably a concealed Catholic chapel: a Council Chamber is to be seen, without any evidence of what councillors assembled in it, or as to what they assembled there to confer about. The furniture of secrecy and treachery is everywhere to be seen in this house, whose history is one quiet record of a family's loyalty, and of fortunate domestic event. It was built in the early years of Henry the Eighth, by William Compton, probably on the site of an older building, certainly on lands which had been in the possession of the family for several hundreds of years. William Compton enjoyed throughout his life the special favour of the King with six wives, fair round belly, and "narrow slits of eyes that gazed freely on all." He successively attained the posts of Royal Page, Chief Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Chancellor of Ireland, and finally led the rearguard of the King's army at the Battle of the Spurs. This rearguard was principally composed of the retinues of Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester, and Wolsey, and they lend a clerical touch to a battle in which it seems strange that, as a rearguard, they should have borne a prominent part at all, considering the precipitancy of the Frenchmen's flight. William Compton received, however, the honour of Knighthood on this occasion, and further proofs of the King's favour are in evidence on the walls of his Warwickshire home. The royal arms and the Tudor roses are emblazoned on its gateway, and in the stained-glass windows of the room in which Henry the Eighth slept the infantine sleep of the much-married and the unjust. Nor did heraldic honours end here. An especial grant was made to Sir William and his heirs of an honourable augmentation of his arms out of the said King's own royal ensigns and devices—to wit, a lion passant guardant or, and for crest a demi-dragon erased gules within a coronet of gold upon a torse argent and vert. The kingly bestower of these mysterious symbols of a royal favour was dangerously ill himself of the sweating sickness when that virulent sixteenth-century form of our present-day influenza killed Sir William at Compton Winyates in 1528. A year before, the King had seen the beauty of Anne Boleyn and had suddenly begun to hear the voice of Conscience loudly crying out to him that Catherine of Aragon was not his lawful wife. A year afterwards, Wolsey, who had refused to grant a probate of Sir William's will till he had fingered a thousand marks, was himself hurrying to his fall: his face dwindled to half its natural size: his misery so apparent that his enemies could not help pitying him.

Forty years after, when the Low Countries were organizing their heroic resistance to Alva, and Cartwright, learned and devout but as bigoted as any mediæval inquisitor who ever devoted a stubborn Jew to red-hot irons and boiling oil, was admonishing Elizabeth's Parliament, and declaring that the giving


The Courtyard

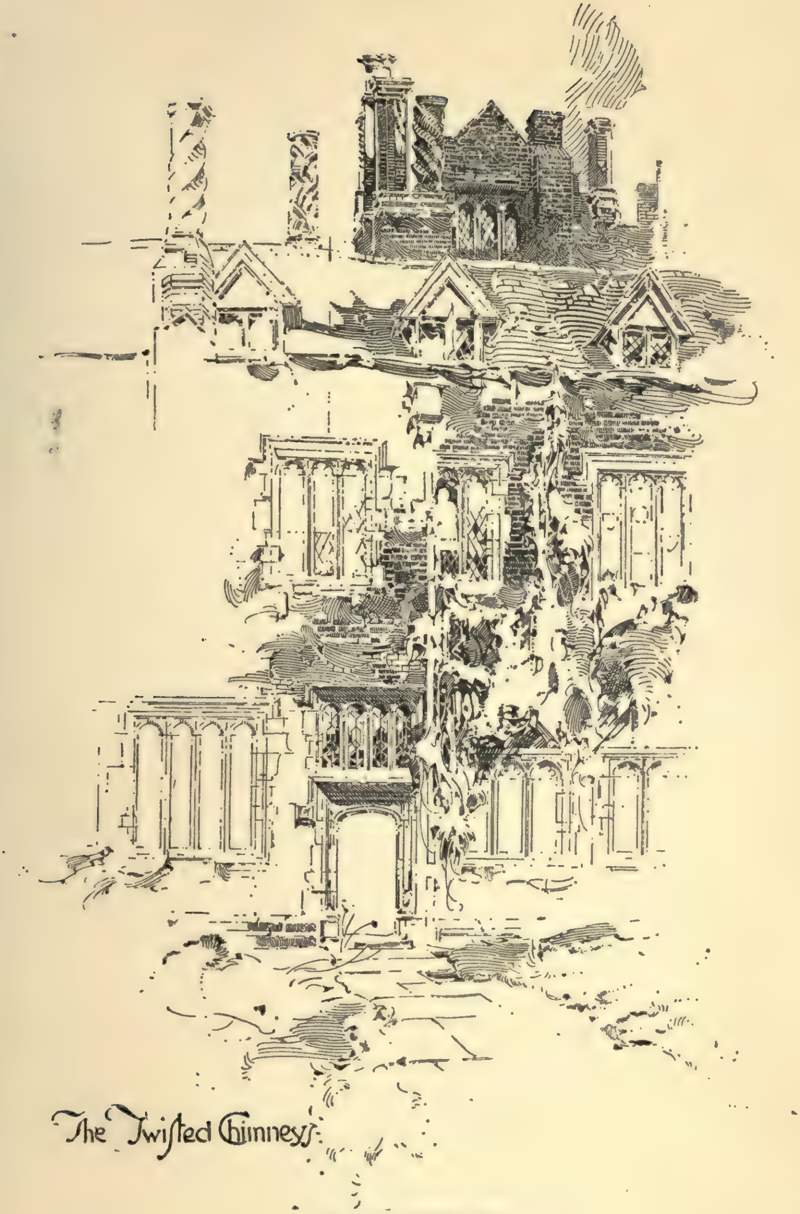
COMPTON WINYATES

of a ring in marriage was a mark of the Beast, the grandson of the builder of Compton Winyates was made a Baron. The making of this Lord Compton's son William Earl of Northampton in 1618, marked the meridian of the house's glory, and added James the First's thistle to its heraldic enblazonments. The comedy of the house now begins to attract the historian's notice with nods and becks and wreathed smiles. Before this William Compton had attained to an Earldom, he had taken the precautionary step of marrying an heiress. Disguised as a baker's boy, he is said to have carried a millionaire's daughter off in a bread-basket. Canonbury was the classic scene of this feat, and the lady's name was Elizabeth. Her father, Alderman Sir John, put on all the Alderman that was in him at this outrage to civic dignity. He indeed took this romantic escapade in the form of a runaway marriage so ill, that for a long time he refused to recognize it. Bread and cheese and kisses were the married couple's fare, till the intervention of the reigning Queen was invoked to smooth over matters and provide a more substantial larder. So successful were Elizabeth's efforts, that on the death of his father-in-law, by this time Lord Mayor of London, Lord Compton found that his wife was one of the richest women in England. Certain pirates of Dunkirk, well posted up in fashionable intelligence, were also apprised of this matrimonial windfall. They set a scheme on foot to carry off Lord Compton, in order to extort a ransom. He saved them the trouble by temporarily going off his head.

Whether the cellars of Compton Winyates had any share in this unusual outcome of a sudden succession to riches is not generally known, but it is probable that they had. The most interesting feature of the incident is the heroic remedy for a husband's disordered brain which was immediately applied by the level-headed wife. After Lord Compton had been maundering and gibbering for some time over the enormous extent of what he looked upon as his own wealth, Lady Compton brought him to his senses by writing and telling him what use she intended making of it herself. Here follow some of her requirements: £2600 quarterly; £600 for charities (quarterly also); £6000 for jewels; £4000 for a certain pearl chain; £2200 to furnish her purse with at starting on this expenditure. A further proviso made it clear that all her debts were to be paid, as well as her servants' wages; and she stipulated expressly for a doubled allowance, and £2000 more in cash on her husband attaining to the Earldom.

Some minor wants are interesting from the light they throw on the customs of the time. This future first Countess of Northampton required three horses for her own saddle. No one was to dare to lend these but herself, and no one was to dare to borrow them but her husband. This last proviso was not necessary, as the future Earl was not up to horse at the moment, being more fit for a strait-jacket than for horse exercise. Two gentlewomen were next called for, to accompany her when she went hunting or hawking or travelling from one house to another. Light is here thrown on the common way of paying Elizabethan visits. Coaches could not always be committed to Elizabethan country roads. When the feat was possible, two coaches were to be in readiness: one for herself, to be lined with velvet and drawn by "four very fair horses"; the other for her ladies. This latter was also to make some show in the countryside. It was to be lined with cloth and laced with gold, or lined with scarlet and laced with silver. Four more horses were to be supplied for this vehicle, to say nothing of six or eight gentlemen as an escort. Caroches and spare horses were also to be held in readiness, and a curious picture is given of a great Elizabethan lady's washerwomen being sent on before her in the company of chambermaids, whose duty it was to see that her lodgings were ready and sweet and clean. Great ladies seem to have carried furniture with them in those days when they went visiting. Beds, stools, chairs, suitable cushions, silver warming-pans, cupboards of plate, fair hangings, represented the "excess luggage" of our fair travellers of present times. A complete drawing-room suite seems also to have been carried about the country from one house to another, consisting of hangings, couch, canopy, glass, carpet, chairs, cushions. No wonder that when ladies went on a visit in those days they went on "a round of them." The roads must have shown a lively aspect under one of these perambulations. A country call must have assumed the proportions of a travelling caravanserai. Lady Compton may have been a grand and prudent dame fit to have a princely fortune —but her husband saw impending bankruptcy peeping from the pages of this *billet-doux*. He hastily resumed his reason.

The son of this Earl whose weak brain thus reeled under the stroke of good fortune was a character of a very different stamp. Far from falling prone under Prosperity's smile, he unflinchingly faced the long days of disaster which dogged Charles the First's footsteps during the great Civil War, and fell at last on Hopton Heath, gallantly fighting for that lost cause to which his devotion had been from the first unfailing. The title of "the Loyal Earl" rewarded his chivalric services, accompanied by the curses of the neighbouring Warwickshire blacksmiths (Parliamentarians to a man) whom he compelled at the pistol-point to shoe Cavaliers' horses. Compton Winyates stood an unflawed jewel of loyalty in the centre of a country notoriously hostile to the cause of Church and King. By a process perhaps perfectly natural, a future Bishop of London was born there, ten years before Charles the First hoisted the royal standard on that stormy afternoon at Nottingham. The career of this ecclesiastic of the house must be told, but not till some details have been given of his father's loyal services in the tented field. He was Spencer (the second Earl's sixth son). Three of the future Bishop's brothers at all events took arms for the King at their father's bidding, and were respectively made by him Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel of a regiment of horse raised by himself, and Governor of Banbury Castle. In the preceding July the loyal father of these sons had undertaken the difficult task of executing the Commission of Array in Warwickshire. With what force he could muster from a stubborn and particularly Roundheaded peasantry, he made a dash on Banbury,

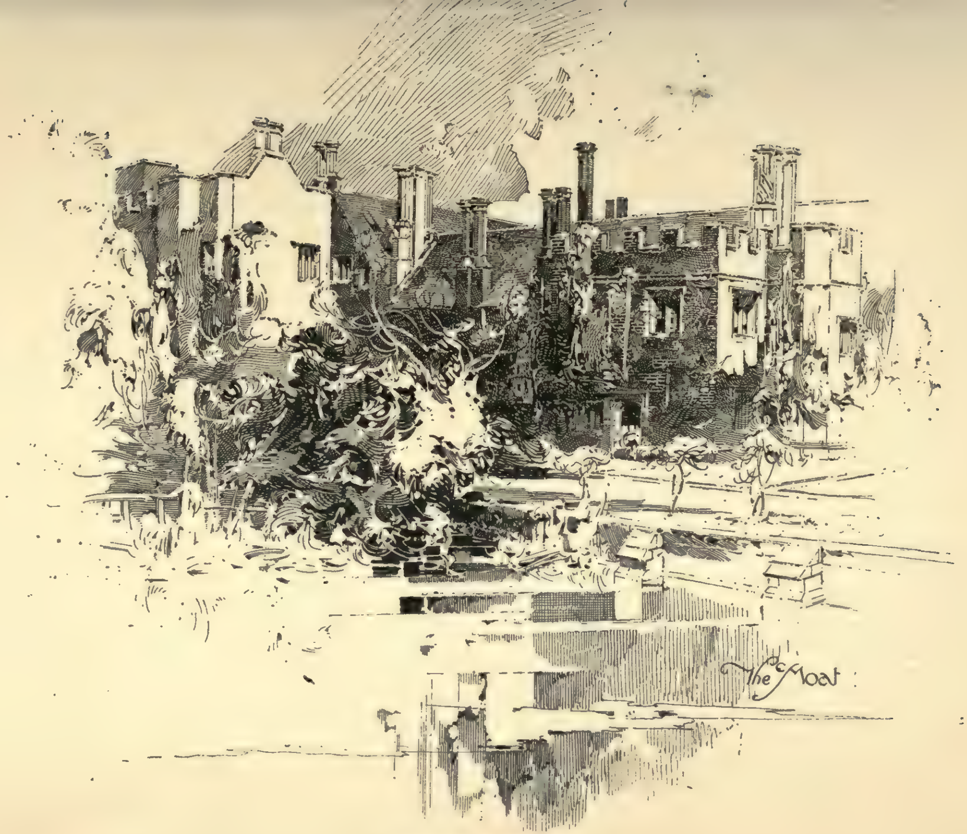

The Twisted Chimneys

COMPTON WINYATES

and took some guns of position that Lord Brook was trying to throw into the place. A skirmish with John Hampden at Southam five days after had a less fortunate issue, his newly recruited Warwickshire Cavaliers showing either Parliamentary proclivities, or, to put a more amiable construction on their conduct, a total lack of control over their horses at a precipitate moment. A ride in better company at Worcester introduced "the Loyal Earl" to the King's guard, and to Rupert of the Rhine; and on the night of the 21st of October he entertained Charles the First at Compton Winyates, and rode with him on the following misty autumn morning on to the plateau of Edgehill. But the March of the following year brought a fatal end to the Earl of Northampton's services to Church and King. He set out from Banbury to relieve Leicester, but arriving too late, hurried to Stafford to relieve the Royalists, who were also in straitened circumstances, there. He succeeded in raising the siege and throwing provisions and ammunition into the town. But Sir John Gell and Sir William Brereton were seen in the neighbourhood with a large Parliamentary force, and the Earl of Northampton marched out of Stafford to meet them. The armies joined issue on Hopton Heath. In a brilliantly conceived and executed charge which he led in person, the commander for the King routed the rebel cavalry and took eight guns. Their infantry, however, rallied to cover the cavalry's retreat, and Northampton was killed whilst pushing his pursuit, scornfully refusing to surrender "to base rogues and rebels." His character lives in his deeds. His eulogy has been written by Clarendon, and bears the following testimony to his worth: "All distresses he bore like a common man, and all wants and hardness as if he had never known plenty and ease. Most prodigal of his person in danger, and would often say 'that if he outlived these wars, he was certain never to have so noble a death.'" A brilliant courtier, not to say a prodigal one, before the shadow of the Civil War fell across Whitehall, the cheerful readiness with which he exchanged town luxuries for the hardships of the field stamp him as a typical Cavalier. They must have been chivalrous characters these fighting Comptons. This man's son extorted a eulogy even from Cromwell.

The fortunes of the house now reached their lowest ebb in company, as was fitting, with those of Charles the First. The same year which saw the Ironsides so triumphantly vindicate Cromwell's genius as a leader and organizer of men on Long Marston Moor, saw Compton Winyates' surrender to the rebel forces after an ineffectual resistance of two days. Milton was publishing his *Areopagitica* at this devastating moment.

It is uncertain who was in command at Compton Winyates during its short siege. Its sudden surrender suggests that only a skeleton garrison held it. But it is possible that the future Bishop of London was present at the ceremony, and may have previously fired a shot or two at the enemies of his house, though he was only eleven years old at the time. Later on, when he was Bishop, he told James the Second that he had formerly drawn his sword in defence of the



COMPTON WINYATES

Constitution, by which it was gathered that as a youth he had taken some part in the Civil War. A very short time after, he startled Oxford's veneration for the clergy by appearing in that city at the head of a small regiment "in a blue coat and naked sword." The Bishop of London was at this time performing the episcopal duties of conveying his pupil the Princess Anne out of the reach of her unconstitutional father. Ecclesiastical Oxford must have rubbed her eyes at this new type of Christian soldier! But the fighting spirit of his race was always strong in Spencer Compton. In Restoration days he had held a cornetcy in the Royal Life Guards before he entered the Church.

He took holy orders at Cambridge in 1661, and the stations paused at in a rapid journey to Fulham included Cottenham Rectory (1666), St. Cross Hospital, Winchester (1667), Christchurch Canonry (1669), Oxford (Bishop's Palace, 1674), London (Fulham) 1675. The attainment of this final dignity brought the zealous High Churchman, who had once been a soldier and who never divested himself of a military bearing, into violent contention with James the Second. A Compton was for the first time seen arguing with his King, and undergoing the agreeable experience of "a lick with the rough side of Lord Chancellor Jeffreys' tongue." The Declaration of Indulgence at last goaded this Cavalier prelate into rebellion. He has already been seen riding about the streets of Oxford with a drawn sword in his hands. He would have used it, too, if James had not obviated so unclerical a necessity by a precipitate flight. This unpleasantness passed, Compton settled down to his episcopal duties and botanical pursuits in his much beloved Fulham. That moated Bishop's Palace may have reminded the occupier of his moated Warwickshire home.

His death, which took place in 1713, closes the record of the Cavalier Comptons, and invites a few remarks on the fine old Warwickshire moated house which gave birth to so strenuous a race. The family's reputation for loyalty, as has already been noticed, is written large in stone and stamped on stained glass all over the house :—in the great hall, with its finely timbered roof and minstrels' gallery : in the drawing-room's oak panels and richly ornamented plaster ceilings : in the bedrooms in which two Kings have slept. The open nature of the race, however, does not seem to show itself in the singular number of Priests' Holes, blind staircases, twisted chimneys, and carefully contrived hiding-places, which give to Compton Winyates, above all other houses in England, the character of an emphasized secretiveness. Nor is a sense of some mystery overhanging the place lessened by the view of no less than four private staircases leading into a Roman Catholic chapel. Indelible memories of the Old Religion thus lie stored in the very heart of a house whose successive owners unflinchingly proclaimed a militant Protestantism. In this carefully hidden celebration of the Mass lies much of Compton Winyates' mystery. What member of this loyal family of Protestants returned, unknown to his kindred, to the worship of the earlier faith ? Or was that silent reconciliation both known and respected? Was it some lady of the house who once again told the rosary at Compton? Did some Cavalier fresh from those Councils of Charles the First (which were not solely inspired by Church of England men) pass silently to the consolation of confession? The dark red old house, with its gables, towers, and strangely twisted chimneys, keeps in its withered heart the secret which will never be revealed. Shrouded by wooded hills, it seems to brood over it in a forlorn solitude.

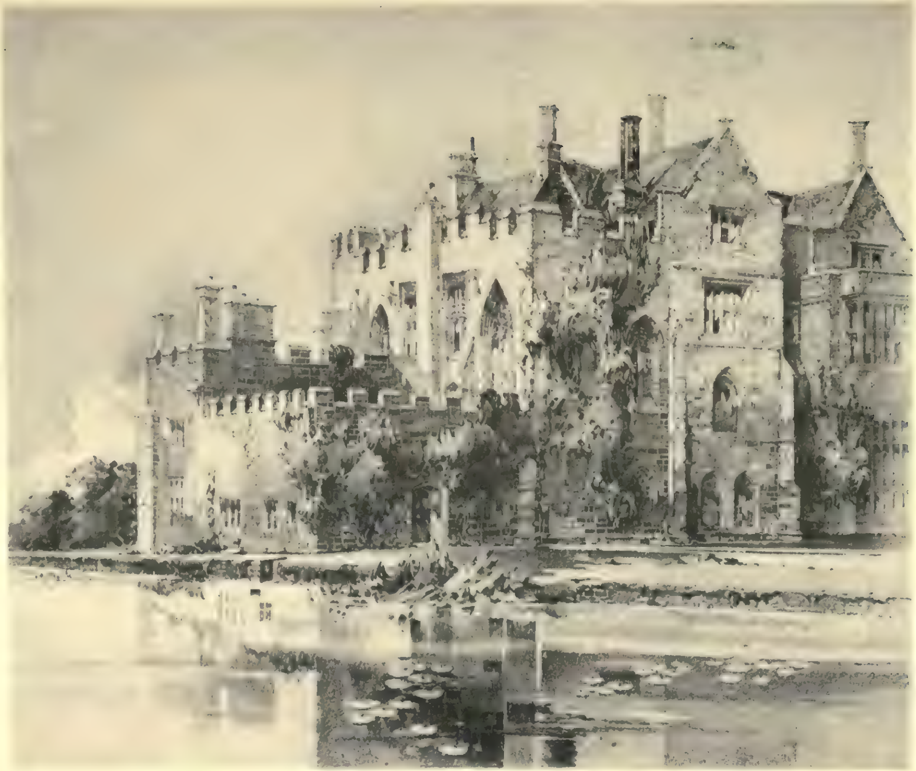
XXII

BROUGHTON CASTLE

1300–1544

IN the year 1810 a large elm tree was felled in the grounds of Broughton Castle, and beneath the roots of the tree a gold ring was found. On it was engraved the figure of a Knight. His legs were crossed as a sign that he was a Crusader. His shield bore for device the arms of St. John of Jerusalem. Upon a scroll was written "Joie sans ni cesse." This is all that is known of a relic which had, it is very likely, lain five hundred years in the earth, and which brings back with it memories of those days of chivalry and romance long since dead, when Knights dared all things for their ladies' eyes, and Templar and Hospitaller closed their serried ranks for the relief of the Holy Sepulchre.

The relic also, in all probability, fixes the date of the earliest part of Broughton Castle, a moated house which lies two miles south-west of Banbury, and whose foundations were laid about the time when the greatest Order of Monastic Knighthood that the world has ever known was tottering to its fall. Its vast possessions were already being marked out for



BROUGHTON CASTLE

the possession of a greedy King, and of that other company of military monks whose fame as Crusaders was second only to theirs. The earlier part of Broughton is therefore redolent of the Crusade. Its later foundations reflect with an equal potency the passages of a less sacred strife, whose civil cause was so doubtful that son and father often fought in opposing ranks. But apart from this reflection of two periods of a nation's warfare, the singular impressiveness of this Castle lies in the fact that, built into each other in an indissoluble union of stone, and standing side by side, are two distinct periods of England's domestic architecture with a lapse of two hundred and forty-four years separating the two.

The general view of this building, made up as it is of two great houses built into one, and bridging in their architectural features so wide an interval of years, is a very striking one. The entrance to it is made in the invariable way by a bridge over the moat. But the moat of Broughton is unusually wide and deep, and the stone bridge which spans it has two arches. The outer gate, as is common in many houses of the kind, is strangely enough perfect, and the assaults of time and of more immediately pressing assailants are seen to have produced the less effect, in proportion as more the greater effect was to be expected. The portcullis, however (an equally essential factor in mediæval domestic comfort), seems to have been not so successful in repelling the common enemy, and must be reported as missing. And in the same casualty list must be set down two other gates which have only left their staples behind them to show that they took part in the fight with time at all. It is time meanwhile to leave these outworks of the Castle (efficient or otherwise) and get inside.

The old part of the house was built by the De Broughtons in the days of one of the early Edwards, and faces east. I should suggest 1301 as a date drawn at a venture, and the times when Barons were demanding nomination of Ministers by Parliament, and exacting fresh confirmation of the Charters, is not obscurely hinted at by the loopholes for the discharge of arrows in the small tower at the south-east angle. These were the days when Bohun, Earl of Hereford, and Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, were beginning to be busy, and the loopholes at Broughton bring that scene before the mind's eye between the first Edward and these two truculent subjects. The matter of dispute between the parties was a simple one, but it ended in strange words. Edward wanted to go to Flanders, and wanted the Earls to go to Gascony; but they wanted to go to Flanders too, it would seem; and ingeniously reminded the fifth of the Plantagenets that they were not bound to foreign service save in attendance on the King. One can hear the royal oaths that followed this declaration of right, catch through the centuries (when coherency stepped to the rescue) the words of the ensuing talk:—

"By God, Sir Earl," says the King to Bigod, "you shall either go or hang." "By God, Sir King," says the Earl to Edward, "I will neither go *nor* hang." The air resounds with these mediæval oaths. We had better get to the later part of the building.

This lies on the north front, and was joined on to the older part by the celebrated family of Fiennes about four years before the dying Henry the Eighth made the old Palace of Westminster quake with his monstrous bellowings. We are in a milder atmosphere here, leave something at all events of the stern age of the Barons behind us, as we pass into the great hall beneath a canopy surmounted by the arms of the new builders. But even here some gentle reminders are given of the Plantagenets' birch of broom. The walls of the hall are simply rough stonework. The passages about the Castle are curiously arched. Arched stone represents the ceiling of the dining-room. Stone staircases are everywhere, as if made for the express purpose of echoing armed feet. Even when, by an unconventional bit of architectural harlequinade, a chapel has been turned into a dressing-room, a stone staircase leads to it. What we call in these days spare bedrooms are full of the same uncompromising material, though in Broughton's earlier days they shadowed what are irreverently called the fat slumbers of the Church. Some fine stained-glass windows bearing very ancient arms do something towards dispelling a despondent feeling which dimly suggests dungeons—but it is not till the second floor in the house is reached, and by the ascent the grand drawing-room, that the age of violence is completely left behind, and we enter domestic surroundings of splendour and peace. It is not, however, the splendid ceiling richly decorated with armorial bearings, the stained-glass windows, the rich hangings and other accessaries to civilization and comfort, which most directly induce the feeling that the age of barbarism is past, and that of a social intercourse almost equally perfidious risen; but strange to say, a most elaborate entrance to the room. This entrance bears traces of having been set up when the King enjoyed his own again. And it is surmounted by the following very singular motto, considering that the head of the house had undeviatingly pursued the course of a rampant Puritanism throughout the whole course of the Civil War. The motto runs as follows:—

"Quod olim fuit meminisse minime Juvat."

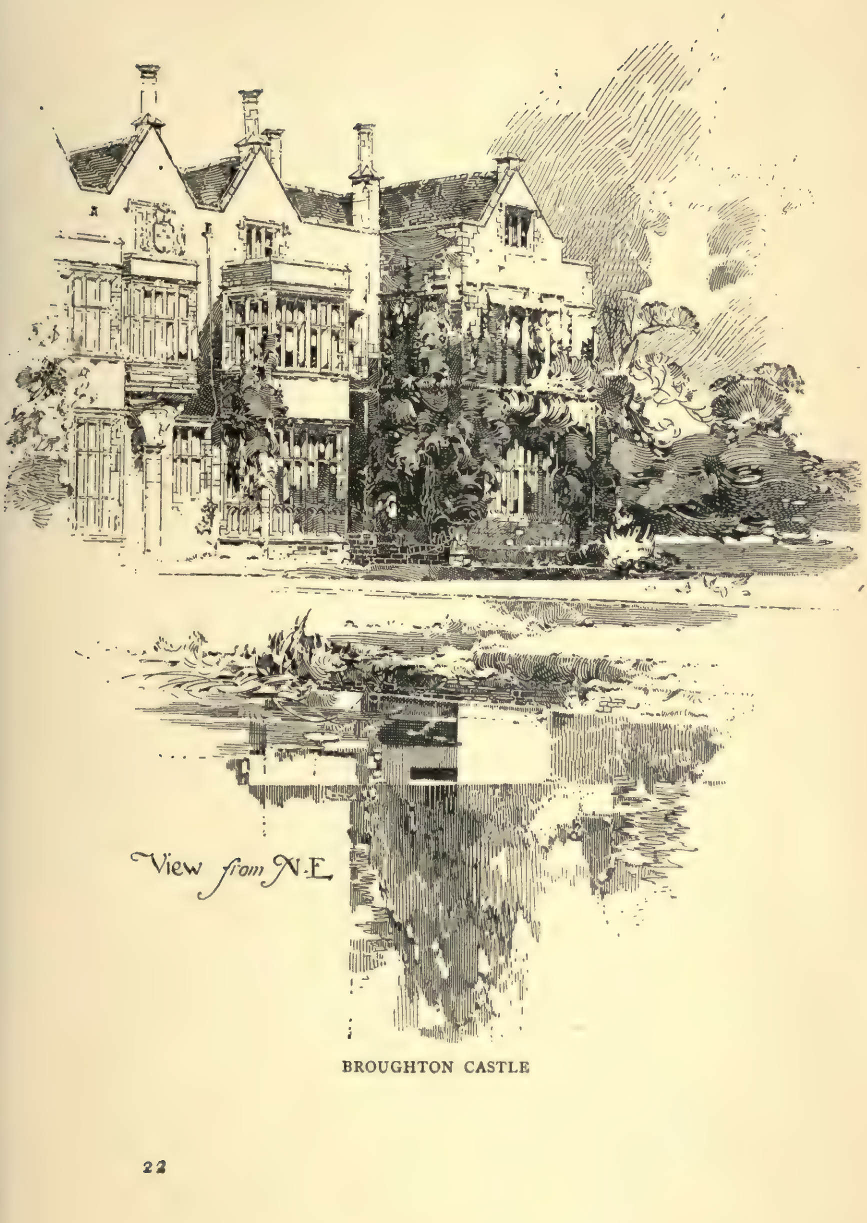
"Let bygones be bygones, and say no more about the matter," has hardly been hazarded as a rough translation up to date, than the Broughton drawing-room is revisited by the strange figure of the setter-up of this text, so significantly suggesting the turncoat, and dressed in a costume in which Charles the Second struggles tonsorially with Oliver Cromwell. "Old Subtlety" appears in creaking shoes.

His name, when in the flesh, was William Fiennes, first Viscount Say and Sele, and he was the son of Richard Fiennes, Lord Say and Sele, by Constance, daughter of Sir William Kingsmill. He succeeded his father as master of Broughton Castle when he was twenty-one, and he was buried at Broughton on 14th April 1662, having attained the respectable age of sixty, and lived through one of the most troublous times in our history.

When it is said that he sailed to affluence over those troubled seas, and after serving every party found himself on the winning side, an idea may be formed of his political capacity. Yet he remains an enigma in a high-crowned hat and a collar Puritanically starched. Nobody seems to know exactly what he wanted except himself, and he probably wouldn't have been able to define it. He was an incarnate embodiment of chronic Opposition, bounded by a vista of self-advancement. This faculty of opposition to everybody and everything makes him akin to the Irishman of the story, who on landing in a savage island and on being told that there was no Government there, said, "Then I'm against it." Clarendon himself seems puzzled by this strange character; sums up his qualities carefully; does not seem to know what to make of him. "Close and reserved, mean and narrow as regards money matters, of great parts and high ambition," these are terms that the historian of the Civil War could have applied as justly to other leaders of the Puritan party, and even then he has to qualify this criticism. He adds that "Old Subtlety" would not be satisfied with offices and preferments without some condescensions and alterations in ecclesiastical matters." Here we experience the true Puritan touch. We have not got yet to the upturned eyes, and the out-turned toes, and the gasps and the groans of the rigid precisian; but we have come very near to them, and can well imagine what long-winded discourses on theological subtleties preceded and rounded the Broughton family prayers. On those devotional occasions, we may be sure that the household had a taste of the only real truth in matters ecclesiastic. It proved too strong for "Old Subtlety's" second son Nathaniel, of whom more by and by. That future stout soldier of the Commonwealth had to fly to Geneva of all places in Europe "to improve his disinclination to the Church with which milk he had been nursed." Here we have a result of "Old Subtlety's" "insistence in alterations in ecclesiastical affairs." Similar experiences remain with us to this day.

Let us take a bird's-eye view of how William Fiennes pursued this ideal in the larger world outside the walls of Broughton Castle. His methods of realizing his high aims may seem singular. Let us start from the year 1621, when the "Old Subtlety" of future years was aged only thirty-nine. What variety of courses in public life do we find him taking? And gathering what honours and emoluments by the way?

Roaring for the degradation of Lord Bacon! Opposing the Benevolence, and spending six months in the Fleet! Courting the friendship of the profligate Duke of Buckingham, fresh from his notorious journey to Spain! A Viscountship rewards this effort for the only true Protestantism, and shows our reformer at the same time a favourite at James the First's bibulous Court. Two years after he opposes the Forced Loan, and simultaneously goes in for a little company promoting. His aim is to colonize the island of New Providence in the Caribbean Sea, for the benefit of Ecclesiasticism of course. This is quite an Exeter Hall touch. He is so eager to people New Providence for the purposes of the Gospel that he has to publish disparaging reports of his own country. His austere Christianity especially shines in a complaint "that in England, masters must not correct their servants." A side view of the bastinado and the knotted whip is here caught, and one begins to wonder to what use the dungeons may have been put at Broughton Castle. We appear to be breathing the atmosphere of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but we are only in the fifth year of Charles the First. Now, this proposer of servant-beating, not to say of the slave trade for his own profit, is seen as the Sir Oracle of the Puritan party. The room is still shown at Broughton where the malcontents—Hampden, Elliot, and others—used to meet, listening for long hours to "Old Subtlety's" fine-drawn distinctions, till the candles burnt down to their sockets and the dawn began to come slowly to the rescue of those windy councillors. The oubliette just outside the door gaped in vain for a breakfast too long delayed. Had it remained open on one of these occasions, Charles the First's cause would not have been engulfed. The question of Ship Money next impels "Old Subtlety" to the exercise of his master-passion, and to cry out "No!" The same proclivity urges him to use the same word when Charles the First, whom he had followed to the Scotch wars, asks him to take the military oath. "No" should be written all over Broughton Castle, as "Que Scais je" was carved on the beams of Montaigne's château at Perigord. "No," however, was not the word when in 1641 the same King proffered "Old Subtlety" a Privy Councillorship, or when he suggested that the Mastership of the Court of Wards would be a becoming post, or that as a Commissioner of the Treasury he might find an added opportunity for ecclesiastical reform. "Yes," strange to say, was the eager not to say rapacious reply to each of these three queries. Being now a full and rewarded courtier of the King, the next step "Old Subtlety" takes is to sign the Grand Remonstrance, which did more than anything else to precipitate the Civil War and to dethrone him. I can see "Old Subtlety," after the successful division in the House of Commons, waving his hat over his head, taking his sword in its scabbard out of its belt and beating the point on the ground at his joy at an issue which was to set England in arms. Providence had interposed (not New Providence, be it well understood). A quickly shifted scene now shows him as a street orator, bareheaded, trying to explain the fiasco of Edgehill to a solemn circle of gaping London citizens. Now our ecclesiastical reformer, instead of setting other people's houses in order, has to see about fortifying his own. Broughton Castle, however, after a tame resistance, surrenders to the King. But for this and other more successful martial efforts, £1400 came into "Old Subtlety's" coffers when the Parliamentary party finally triumphed. Military or mercenary instincts had, however, no sooner impelled him to side with the Army against the Parliament, than some occult influence, probably the forbidding figure of Cromwell "casting a shade," prompted him to try and patch up a peace with the King. When the axe had fallen outside the fatal window at Whitehall, our hero discovered that he had never had the least thought of dissolving the Monarchy. The idea had come a little late, but nothing seems more certain than that no one in England more abhorred the idea of the levelling of ranks and classes which he fancied


View from N.E.

BROUGHTON CASTLE

impending, or was more proud of being distinguished from other men by his title. London being no longer a place for him, he retired to Lundy. Not finding that island large enough for literature, he betook himself to his ancestral seat, and the moated quietude of Broughton Castle presently brought forth the two following works, designed of course for the purpose of edifying :—

1. *Folly and Madness made Evident* (a tract against the Quakers).
2. *The Quakers' Reply Manifested to be Railing.*

This business finished (and the Quakers also), "Old Subtlety" laid down his pen, and calmly awaited the Restoration.

His strange quest "for some condescension and alteration in ecclesiastical matters," as Clarendon called it, has been traced for forty-one years, and may appear to some people to be worthy of a shorter and less dignified phrase. The suggestion may force itself upon the mind, that "Old Subtlety's" changes were too sudden to be politically inspiring, if they did not amount in some cases to an absolutely pantomimic change of front. But in every pantomime, political or otherwise, the final transformation scene comes at last, and is immediately followed by the fall of the curtain. In "Old Subtlety's" case the climax took place within a year of his death; when, after a prolonged search after ecclesiastical truth, and a successful attempt to serve *two* masters, he put the final touch to a political career by serving *three*, and opened the gates of Broughton to Charles the

Second. The elaborate entrance to the great drawing-room, which has already been described, stood ready for the final political somersault; the motto written above it was there for all to read! We can see "Old Subtlety" pointing to it slyly, as he ushers the Merry Monarch into the room; catch the sound of Old Rowley's sardonic laugh. Quite close by was the room in which the Puritan leaders under the immediate direction of his present host had plotted his father's overthrow.

Death closed this instructive career on 14th April 1662. But while the deceased politician had been busy speculating, company promoting, striving for some alteration in ecclesiastical matters, and perhaps doing something else in the way of serving his country for a profit to which decency forbids us to give a name, the fortunes of Broughton Castle had been as strenuously and more honourably upheld by two sons. Their history is the biography of two soldier brothers, the younger of whom had a veneration amounting almost to idolatry for the elder. The latter's name was Nathaniel. The younger brother's name was John. We have caught a glimpse of Nathaniel already, trying to throw off at Geneva the too heavy form of religious food that had been stuffed down his unwilling neck at Broughton. He sat in the Long Parliament as Member for Banbury, but put off the senator's robes for the soldier's morion when the drums began to roll for the Civil War. He was one of the first to take the field, and commanded a regiment of horse in the army of Essex. A failure to prevent the Earl of Northampton from capturing some guns which had been sent by Lord Brooke to Banbury, was redeemed in the fight at Worcester, where in the moment of a second defeat he distinguished himself by conspicuous courage. The details of Nathaniel's gallantry on this occasion will be found chronicled in a publication bearing the singular title of *Jehovah-Jireh*, on page 164. The name of the work is typical perhaps of the man whose conduct it describes. For in Nathaniel Fiennes, and even more so in his brother John, we are brought face to face with the true type of Roundhead who overthrew the cause of the Cavaliers, whose military enthusiasm was heightened by a religious tinge, who fought as well as lived as if always under the Great Taskmaster's eye. Nathaniel rode at Edgehill in Sir William Balfour's regiment of horse, where he received a very real impression of the express nature of Prince Rupert's fiery onslaughts. Rallying flying troopers was his arduous task in the intervals of a pursuit kept up for miles. The defence and surrender of his own home was his next experience of the war, though whether he commanded the garrison at the siege of Broughton Castle is a moot point. I am inclined myself to think that "Old Subtlety" was there in person, with one eye fixed on honour and the other on the family valuables, and that he had something to say to the signing of that surrender. In the intervals of active service in the field, the family literary instinct moved Nathaniel to take pen in hand. With the shock of the events fresh upon him, he wrote his *True and Exact Relation of both the Battles fought by His Excellency Robert Earl of Essex and his Forces against the Bloody*

Cavaliers, the one of the 23rd of October last near Keynton, the other at Worcester. The strong bias shown in the title stamps Nathaniel as one of our first war correspondents, and by Keynton, Edgehill is meant. Keynton was perhaps a temporary halting-place in that Rupert *débâcle.* That brilliant personage, the Skobeleff of the Civil War, was Nathaniel Fiennes' evil genius, and he was destined to cross his path again with very nearly fatal results. The test of a great soldier has been said to be his conduct in defeat. The dispatch of Nathaniel to Bristol in 1643 seems a proof of the maxim, since he had never ridden across a field of victory since the war broke out. Bristol, however, soon had proofs of his military alertness. Conspiracy was to have opened the city's gates on March the 7th, but Fiennes made his perception felt three hours before the time appointed for that formality, and Robert Yeomans and George Bourchier paid the extreme penalty for being spies for the cause of Charles. But before another month was over, the new Governor of Bristol found himself with only the following aids for the defence of the city :—

1. Not sufficient men to man the walls.
2. No money to pay those he had.
3. No officers of any experience.
4. Unfinished fortifications.

A fifth reinforcement of inefficiency took the form of Prince Rupert thundering at the gate. A four days' cannonade was sufficient to pave the way for an assault, and on the 26th of July the Cavaliers swarmed into the breach, breathing oaths and pillage.

A prompting which his enemies imputed to lack of courage, and those who knew him to humanity, induced Fiennes to save the city from sack (a difficult task, one would have thought, since the Cavaliers were already in the place), and the citizens from the horrors of street-fighting. He surrendered the town. A court-martial at St. Albans in the following September was the reward for this weakness or error of judgment, and on the 23rd of the month Nathaniel's Christmas greetings took the form of a sentence of death.

It was not carried into effect. The man's courage was on record, and probably Cromwell held up a hand ; but a trip abroad was suggested as an episode which stopped tongues wagging and closed a military career. The year before King Charles's execution, Nathaniel Fiennes reappeared in public life. A peculiar political nostrum, composed of a colonel with his sword drawn and a list of forty members of the majority in his hand, called "Pride's Purge," for the moment excluded Nathaniel from that House of Commons in which he had only just taken a seat. Six years after, his star had risen with Cromwell's. He was made a member of his Council, Keeper of the Great Seal : finally one of the Committee of Encouragement in that supremely dramatic moment when the great soldier, and the usurper greater still, was eagerly stretching out and half-heartedly withdrawing a hand, not clean yet from the blood of the 30th of January, but itching for the Crown.

Cromwell's death was the signal for Nathaniel's final retirement into private life. A general opinion that it was the religious side of the movement which had made him the staunch Cromwellian that he was, saved him from the effects of that Restoration which he neither forwarded nor opposed. Uninfluenced by the shining paternal example of time-serving at the moment in operation outside the Broughton Castle drawing-room door, this stern Republican of Milton's England bowed no knee to Rimmon or to Royalty. He lived out the remainder of his life in the seclusion of a Wiltshire village, and was buried at Newton Toney in the December of 1669. To the last he remained on terms of an extreme affection with his brother John. He had always been John's hero.

This hero-worshipper had been at Bristol with his elder brother, and had violently assaulted one of the witnesses who had dared to impugn Nathaniel's courage. John indeed was an even more typical Cromwellian soldier than his elder brother, and his claim to the title was finally established by his riding in the right wing of the Parliamentary army at Naseby, under the immediate command of Cromwell himself. This position in the fighting line shows him to have been one of the celebrated Ironsides, who fought with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon on that day, and who as they rode through a swollen stream on to the battlefield trusted it is true in God, but were particularly careful to keep their powder dry. In this twofold observance John Fiennes followed to the letter his great commander's field order. In recognition of his services he received the following testamur, in which, while praising one of them, Cromwell draws with his own hand his ideal

Ironside. Writing of John Fiennes, he says: "His diligence is great. And this I must testify, that I find no man more ready to all services than himself. I find him a gentleman of that fidelity to you, and so conscientious that he would all his troop were as civil and religious as any, and makes it great part of his care to get them so."

Here we have a picture of the perfect Parliamentary soldier drawn by the master-hand who called him into being. A cavalry officer requires no higher credentials than these.

We can leave John Fiennes with these honours thick upon him. It is a small thing after this that he was summoned by Cromwell in 1657 to his House of Lords, or that he married Susannah, daughter of Thomas Hobbes of Amwell Magna in Hertfordshire, and that his son Lawrence, by this marriage, became fifth Viscount Say and Sele in 1710.

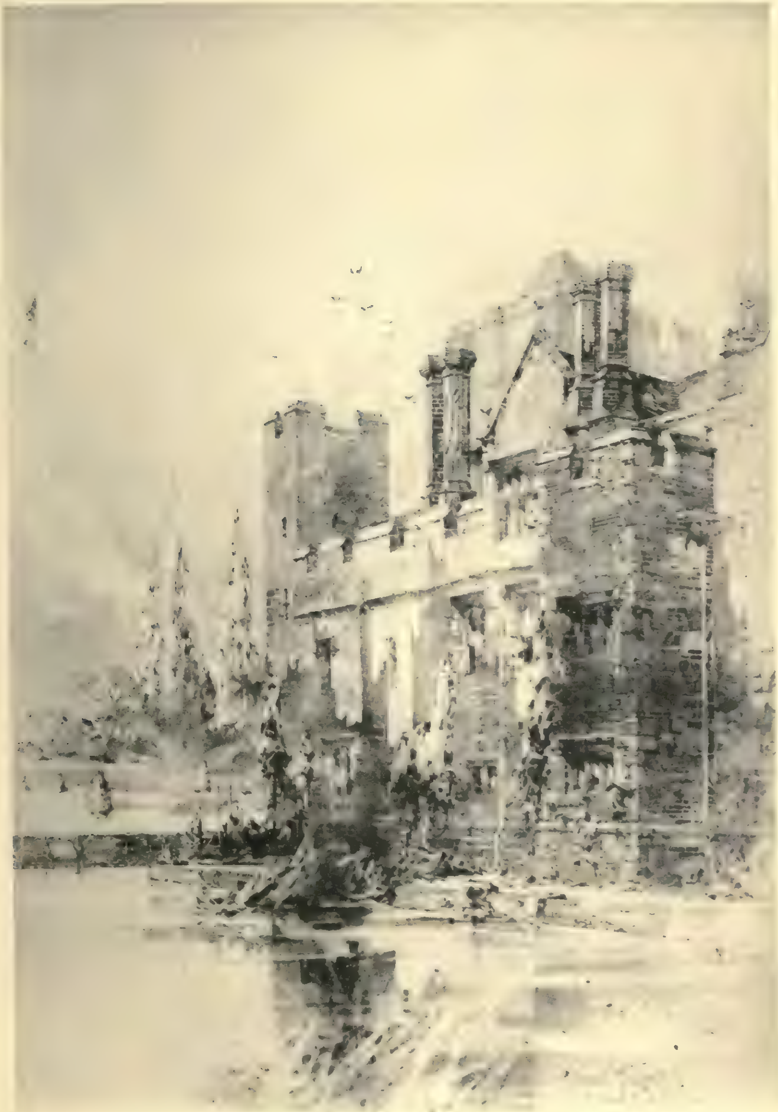
The devious and dubious political dealings of "Old Subtlety" and the martial doings of his two sons seem to have turned this note on Broughton Castle into a mere record of the sustained struggle of its owners to overthrow Charles the First. And yet, if Compton Winyates may be considered as a moated house essentially Royalist, the claim of Broughton Castle to represent the austere and opposite interest in the great Civil War can hardly be too much insisted upon. In the very aspect of the building there is something stony, inflexible, and forbidding. Such a look was to be seen every day in the faces of those contemporaries who ranted at street corners in huge military boots with long tucks by their sides, and incoherently denounced a Monarchy which was the first they had ever lived under, but which was nevertheless, according to them, to be rooted up and utterly destroyed to make way for a Fifth. The practical side of these Fifth Monarchy preachers was demonstrated at Naseby and Marston Moor. Their iron personality stamped itself on the times; on the houses they lived in; on every varying phase of England's social life. And it is not surprising, therefore, that strong suggestions of their characteristics should seem reflected from the walls of a house which reared two generations of malcontents in those subversive views of which it was in truth a hotbed. If so much may be said of any house, the history of Broughton Castle may claim to be Parliamentarian.

And yet side by side with this stern tendency, another of a very different kind imperceptibly makes itself felt, before which the austerities, the inflexibilities, and the groanings, and the prayers, and the inspired onslaughts of the victorious Saints, take flight and fade to nothingness under the magic glamour of Romance. The twilight deepens of the world of dreams, and banishes those noisy votaries of liberty and disorder. The dead Crusader's gold ring found under the felled elm tree hushes the designing creakings of "Old Subtlety's" square-toed shoes! The thought of the Hospitaller's unrecorded deeds in the Holy Land dim the story of Nathaniel Fiennes' gallantry at Worcester, and his brother John's victorious ride at Naseby under the stern eye of his great commander-in-chief! The pathos of that infinitely distant past asserts itself, which holds in a magic keeping the secret of the Knight of St. John: tempts the fancy to picture the train of chivalrous deeds linked with the posy and the buried ring: to ponder the possibilities of an old-world love-story whose real course must remain for ever unknown!

XXIII

HEVER CASTLE

THE touch of a munificent yet tasteful restoration has transformed Hever Castle within the last five years. The historic home of the Boleyns has, in the interval mentioned, fallen into the hands of a millionaire. To this much-to-be-envied class money is naturally nothing; but that they sometimes fail to make a proper use of it is a question extremely open to debate. The additions which have been made to Hever, however, absolve the directing genius from any such slur. A moated house dating back to Tudor days may be too small for a wealthy man's lavish and necessary scope of entertainment. Our ancestors were content with small rooms; had no aversion to low ceilings; and, as has been mentioned before, were perfectly careless as to whether windows could be opened or not, since they habitually went to bed with the birds (as some defamers say, to save the suet), and as habitually rose with them and rushed out into the open air, to save themselves from being asphyxiated. With these lessons from the past before him, the problem confronting the new owner of Hever Castle was how to make the necessary additions for accommoda-



HEVER CASTLE

tion without destroying the character of the old house.

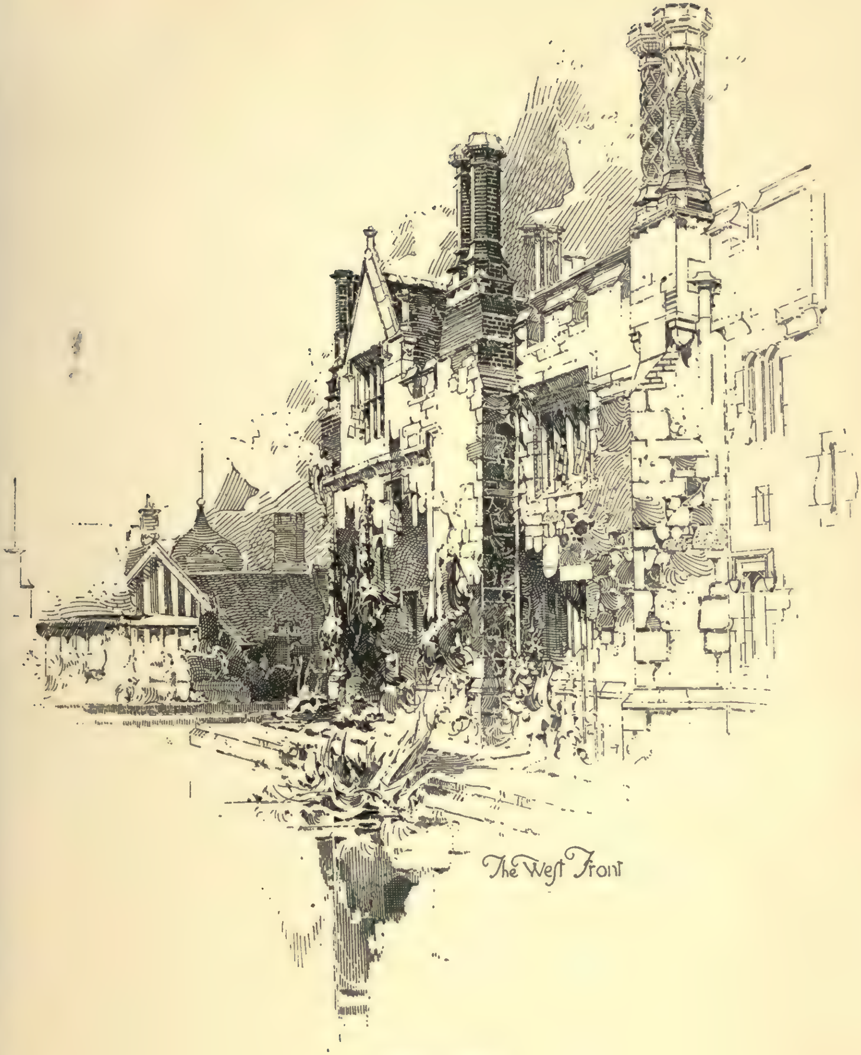
With the assistance of a sympathetic architect, the problem has been most satisfactorily solved, by building a series of guest-houses outside the moat which washes the four sides of the old house, and which, to those who do not know their secret use, have all the appearance of representing an old Tudor village. Such clusters of outbuildings were common in the days when moats round houses were necessary. The retainers of the lord of the manor lived in them, and were pleased in those insecure times to nestle under the shelter of the great house. When the waves of civil war or the menace of marauders was signalled by the ringing of the moated house's alarm bell, they fled into that fastness as one man, leaving whatever agricultural implement they may have had in their hands at the moment, and when the drawbridge had been raised behind them, armed themselves with cross-bow, arquebus, pitchers of boiling pitch, or whatever other amenities of contemporary social intercourse were handy or opportune for the moment. In the discharge of this public duty, they often saw their own homes on the other side of the moat go up in flames. But they remained calm in the confident knowledge that they would soon be built up again.

No such fate, in these days of grace, advance, and a well-regulated proportion of county constabulary, is likely to befall the new buildings which the present owner of Hever has built outside his moated house, and which under the artistic cover of a small Tudor village conceal what are really a set of bijou residences for the reception of friends, furnished from basement to roof with a munificence which never errs against a correct taste. If a criticism may be suggested against so admirable an attempt to bridge the difficulty of keeping the character of an old moated house, while making it at the same time adaptable for the needs of an enlarged hospitality, it may be directed against the very bridge itself, which enables the guests to pass from their quarters outside the moat into the Castle itself. This bridge seems to be somewhat of a blot: though no doubt it is a comfort on windy or rainy nights, since it is covered. But people who have the honour of visiting such a house as Hever should not be afraid of going home over a drawbridge. The feat would be in keeping however wet the night might be. The present structure somewhat painfully recalls the covered entrance to the Earl's Court Exhibition. With this suggestion all criticism of the restorations at Hever ends. Nothing, in short, could be more magnificent or in finer taste. To attain this end Europe has been ransacked. Italy, France, Germany have had to yield up treasures, in the way of furniture, to a taste cultivated to the extreme of perception and armed with an inexhaustible purse. The fifteenth-century Burgundian chair in the armoury, to quote an instance, is a specimen calculated to make the most rigid Christian antiquary forget the Ninth Commandment. A Charles the Second chair in the library is sufficiently perfect to make "Old Rowley" in person rise from his grave, and seat himself in it, with that unstudied ease and elegance which was his. He might well have designed the political master-stroke against a contumacious Parliament from such a point of vantage. The specimens of Italian furniture are extraordinarily rich and rare, while as regards the "Caqueteuse Chair" nothing more need be said than that Kings have in all probability listened from it to subjects' grievances which they had no intention whatever of remedying. Apart from all these priceless and artistic additions to Hever Castle, however, probably as expensive and certainly the one most directly bearing on the romance of the house is the beautiful restoration, with its Tudor straight walks and trellis-work, of Anne Boleyn's Garden.

For the memory of "that brown girl with the perthroat and extra finger" (according to Margaret More's malicious description) must always haunt Hever with a searching and a singular charm. Not that the Castle itself, left intact as to its outer walls as it still is, can fail to strike the fancy. It can lay no claim, it is true, to that secrecy of site and that sombreness of exterior which lends to places like Ightham and Compton Winyates a charm and a mystery all their own; nor does it possess that environment of well-timbered and undulating park-land which points to Groombridge as the pleasantest of possible prisons for a captive poetic Prince. Apart from its recently added surroundings, Hever lies, in comparison, transparently exposed. Green meadowlands of the Eden lie about it, lending a serene air. There is no suggestion about Hever of treasons, stratagems, and spoils. It looks, and more than ever now, a habitable great house whose life was and is lived cheerily; and its mass of buttressed towers, embrasures, square-headed windows, to say nothing of the admirably constructed suggestion of the Tudor village which now nestles under its walls, seem only to have caught from time the impress of clear and harmonious colour. Since the outer walls have not needed the aid of the restorer's hand, a near approach to the place will not remove this impression. Though it is embattled, strongly machicolated, defended by a portcullis and the invariable thick oaken doors always associated with places of the sort, and sometimes the most ancient and interesting things about them, the place seems redolent of a rich and bygone hospitality which chance and wealth have recently so fortunately called back to life. Above all, the reconstructed Tudor garden tells the story of the place; still seems to echo romantic hopes destined to be fatal, and passionate ambitions doomed to bring beauty to dust and death; perceptibly whispers the long story of ambition, passion, hope deferred, and hope triumphant, which here once agitated the heart of Anne Boleyn.

For she must always remain the tutelary goddess of the place. And if this old house which was once her home may be considered, as it now more than ever has claim to be, a representative specimen of the architecture of the Middle Ages, so may she with equal reason be looked upon as one of its representative heroines. Subtle and enigmatic siren as she should be, it is a characteristic trait in her story that doubt should exist even as to where she was born.

Some name Blickling Hall in Norfolk, in those days a great moated house like Hever, and which would have been included in these papers had not the original house been pulled down by a purse-proud lawyer and the moat filled up by his unimaginative descendants. Through this piece of hereditary turpitude, a fine ghostly legend has had to be withheld. Rochford Hall, in Essex, is by others preferred as Anne's birthplace. The point is a moot one, and may be left in that half-lighted atmosphere, as of some world fantastical, through which so many incidents in Anne Boleyn's earlier story move like the armies of dreams. It is certain, however, that at Hever she passed most of her girlish days—days in which young ladies were much earlier made adepts in embroidery, dancing, and *œillades* than they are at present. (But perhaps so far as the last attainment is concerned, this is impossible.) Meanwhile it is pleasant to picture this earlier life. There was probably little in it to wake serious feeling. Sir Thomas Boleyn, like most gentlemen in those merry days, kept open house, and the portcullis and the drawbridge were, it is likely enough, the only solemn features of his Castle. The baying of hounds, the jingle of hawks' bells, and the lowing of herds would almost constantly enliven the outer walls, and remind wayfarers that they were in the neighbourhood of a great country gentleman's seat. In the crowded hall (now decorated with a most splendid fireplace, and a more magnificent screen) Gothic hospitality reigned. In the days of the Boleyns it would have been rush-strewn and certainly malodorous but for the sweet herbs that were scattered at stated times over the rushes, and which replied to the tread of guests crowding to the festal board by yielding up their delicious scent. In a later reign the great Bacon pronounced that no garden was perfect without grass walks planted with these same herbs, which would perform the same perfumed office to the saunterer. In contrast to this drawback to the floor of the banqueting hall as it stood in Anne Boleyn's time, two or three rooms reserved for the lord and lady of the house would have shown a considerable amount of elegance. The looms of Flanders were already beginning to be busy with classic subjects. Diana descended to Endymion on the arras: the designs of Palladis may have shown the loves of Cupid and Psyche on octagon screens; and the melting eyes of Anne Boleyn may have dwelt with a precocious and growing perception on many another romantic transcript from a moving mythology. As she walked the long gallery (now tastefully furnished and redecorated, but in which the old newel stair in the bay window is still to be seen) the heraldic emblazonings on the windows would have told her the story of no undistinguished descent: in her mother's right the four coated shields of Howard, Brotherton, Warren, and Mowbray: in her father's the eight quarters of Hoo, St. Omer, Malmains, St. Leger, Wallop, and Ormonde. The garden on the other side of the moat, now so beautifully brought back to Tudor life, listened to many whispered conclaves between Anne and her royal and completely enslaved lover. The burly form of Henry the Eighth still


The West Front

HEVER CASTLE

seems to move down its straight walks, and the scarlet and gold doublet of that amorous King takes a dimmer hue as his royal form passes under the shadow cast by the trellis-work.

Such were some of the features of the home from which Anne Boleyn, when still quite a girl, started for her first sight of that coloured and gorgeous world, which was bursting into life about her. She left England as a Maid of Honour in the train of Henry the Eighth's sister, and was present at the marriage of that Princess with the French King. For some years after death had dissolved this union, Anne remained at the French Court, principally in attendance on that melancholy Queen Claude, who looked with such an austere eye on the pageants which made Francis the First's Court splendid. The mistress's view of these vanities was not the maid's. Subsequent events suggest that the young English girl drank in these glories greedily. Pleasure-loving, impressionable, she must have lived a hundred lives in one, in that brilliant intoxicating atmosphere, must have caught the flavour of its gay gallantries, and modelled herself unconsciously on its dangerous freedom from thought. She may have been the Queen of Beauty in many a tournament. It is possible that her brilliant eyes may have reflected those festivities with which the French King entertained his brother of England, and that she saw the most magnificent spectacle of the age, and her own fate at the same moment, when Court duties drew her to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. A tradition, as pleasingly vague as most of those which cling about her memory, suggests that here Henry the Eighth (amorous in spite of Froude) first saw and loved. Unlikelier things may have happened. If Anne was present, she would have taken care to be prominent; and in that position she would certainly have attracted the royal yet roving eye. One may at all events be pretty certain that if she *was* on the spot, no such untimely ague as upset the Duke of Buckingham's calculations would have kept her a prisoner in her chamber when

> "Those sons of glory, those two lights of men,
> Met in the vale of Andren."

Be this as it may, rumour records little of her subsequent doings in France, and history nothing, till a vague date comes doubtfully to the rescue, and suggests her transference to the English Court, and her appointment as Maid of Honour to Catharine of Arragon.

Before she entered upon that service which was to make an episode in history, it would be natural for her to stay for a time at her father's house. We may picture her at Hever, therefore, once more, making new Court dresses. The Tudor green and white would not have been the wear in France—in spite of the recent *Entente Cordiale.* As she sits over that official embroidery and needlework she is seen as if in a picture. An exquisitely beautiful woman of the world (too much of the world probably, as the censorious had already begun to remark), with a high colour, rich brown hair parted down the middle, hazel eyes capable of every expression, now melting, now aflame, and a figure already voluptuous yet perfectly moulded. To these attractions add "a lively charm of foreign manner," and there is a reason for Kentish candour being startled, and a King of England inflamed. It is not difficult to see raised eyebrows and pursed lips in the family circle at Hever as the old-fashioned walls, and the arras which had listened for years to the humdrum of country commonplace, re-echoed startlingly to the latest vivacities from France. I can see the brilliant young Maid of Honour following the flight of her story with arch eyes, and Sir Thomas blinking like an owl suddenly awakened who thinks that he has seen mice, and his lady raising herself in her chair astonied, and the family priest uncertain whether to smile or to refrain.

There was a certain gallant gentleman, however, who lived a few miles away, at Allingham Castle, Wyatt by name, who admired this brilliant talk not less than he admired the brilliant talker. Tennyson has described this personage finely. "Sir Thomas was a fine courtier," says his son's servant William in *Queen Mary*—"Queen Anne" (Anne Boleyn, that is to say) "loved him. A fine courtier of the old Court Sir Thomas." To which the son, on the eve it will be remembered of his insurrection against Queen Mary, replies—

> "Courtier of many Courts, he loved the more
> His own grey towers, plain life, and lettered ease,
> To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
> The lark above, the nightingale below,
> And answer them in song."

This gentleman thus described had seen Anne Boleyn at the French Court. To see her and hear her was to admire. And he no doubt rode over to Hever pretty often, and after a few feints with Sir Thomas Boleyn on wheat and cattle, and with the lady of the house on town fashions and the newest practice in preserves, passed into that Tudor garden (now so beautifully restored), and sitting at the feet of the newly returned beauty from France, gazed, listened, and was blest.

Here in his own quaint language is a very detailed portrait of the future Queen of England, as she must then have appeared:—

"There was at this time presented to the eye of the Court the rare and admirable bewtie of the fresh and yonge Lady Anne Bolein, to be attendichte upon the Queene. In this noble imp the graces of nature graced by gracious educacion seemed even at first to have promised bliss unto hereafter times: she was taken at that time to have a bewtie not so whitly cleere and fresh, above all we may esteeme, which appeared much more excellent by her favour passinge sweete and cheerful, and thes both also increased by her noble presence of shape and fasion, representing both mildness and majesty, more than can be exprest. *There was found indeed upon the side of her naile upon one of her fingers some little showe of a naile, which yet was so small, by the report of those who have seen her, as the workmaister seemed to leave it an occasion of greater grace to her hand, which with the tip of one of her other fingers, might be and usually was hidden, without any least blemish to it.* Likewise there were said to be upon certin parts of her body small moles, incident to the clearest complexions;

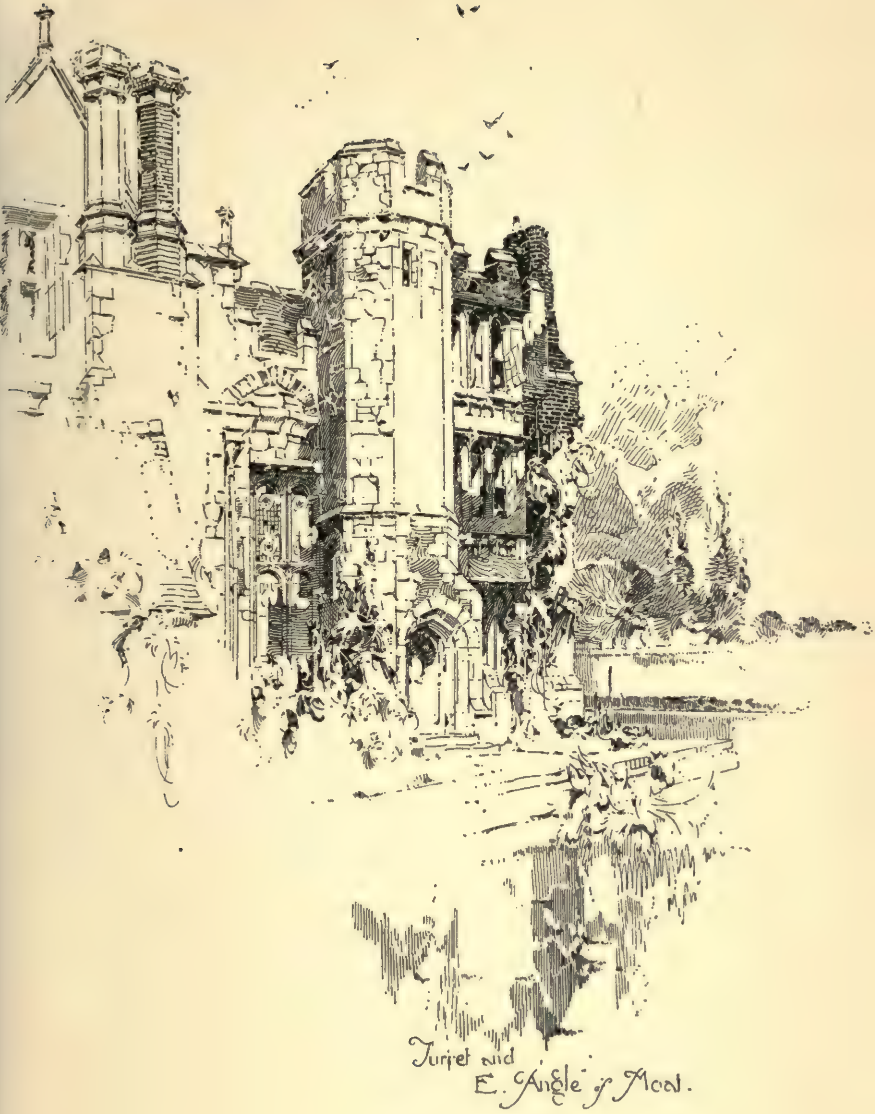
and certinly both thes were none other than might more stain their writings with notes of malice, that have catch at such light moles in so bright beams of bewtie, than in any part shadow it, as may right wel appeare by many arguments, but chiefly by the choice and exquisite judgments of many brave spirits that were esteemed to honor the honorable parts in her, even honored of envie itself."

These passages at Hever with the truest and most devoted lover she ever had, must have recurred one fancies to Anne Boleyn's mind in days to come, when fortune had dowered her with more than the dreams of avarice. Into the world of Court intrigue where that fortune awaited her, with half-averted face, she was now to pass. At what especial time, or at what especial place she met the man, "big enough, and like to become too big, with long slits of eyes that gaze freely on all, as who should say who dare let or hinder me," and who was at the time King of England, is, as we have said before, a moot point. Henry may or may not have seen her at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. But it is certain that a meeting would be the immediate and inevitable consequence upon her entering upon the post of Catharine of Arragon's Maid of Honour, and the King's infatuation and the Queen's jealousy may have burst into life at the same moment. The curious defect in one of Anne's hands, which Margaret More with fine malice calls "an extra finger," and Sir Thomas Wyatt, with chivalrous circumlocution, "a slight appearance of an extra nail," was evidently considered by the injured Queen a deformity sufficiently marked to excite a royal loathing. With the amiable intention of bringing this defect into prominence, Catharine of Arragon frequently challenged Anne to play at cards with her in the King's presence in order to give this already deflecting husband an opportunity of observing a freak of nature which appeared to her ominous. Witchcraft, omens, signs, and tokens were rampant in the England of that day. Henry no doubt saw but remained enthralled. Something more meaning than an extra nail was needed to break the rapidly growing intimacy. This was furnished by that first and real love affair of Anne Boleyn which ended in her undoubted affiance to the eldest son of the Duke of Northumberland. Whether, as has been supposed, Wolsey, with some secret, and not too ecclesiastical intent, had been the moving agent in throwing Anne into Henry's way, can never be certainly known. But at this crisis he suddenly appeared upon the scene, and acted in so masterful and peremptory a manner as suggested the imminence of a danger to deeply laid plans. The betrothed couple were separated with almost brutal force. Lord Percy was sent into banishment in the North. Anne was relieved of her post as Maid of Honour, and sent in a sort of exile home to Hever.

This priestly interference in all probability gave the death-blow to a real lovers' union. Anne at all events left London vowing vengeance on Wolsey should ever the opportunity of wreaking it come to her hands. A more interesting consideration is raised by the question as to what extent the banished Maid of Honour had seen possibilities in the King's obvious infatuation, and as to whether or no she had now made up her mind to mould those possibilities to her own ends. And here the point is reached where those who believe that Anne really loved Percy, and those who believe that she really loved the King, come into an ever undeterminable conflict. Who indeed can decide definitely on these delicate issues, in a love episode of nearly four hundred years ago! I myself am inclined to favour the Percy theory, and to believe that the daughter of the Kentish Knight, experienced as she was in the intrigues of two Courts, and baulked on the threshold of a real love, saw the Royal Opportunity clearly offering itself, and resolutely made up her mind to grasp power as a substitute for passion. If this was the case, how dramatic must have been this isolation at Hever! What a subject for some of our later-day analysts, the hopes, the despairs, the questionings of this ambition cut off from its bent! What struggles of conflicting interests destined to change the face of a whole epoch! How fiercely this beautiful girl's ambitious heart must have beaten under the latest velvets of Paris or London! The long gallery must have resounded over and over again to the hurried tread of hope deferred. Trim garden walks and formal trellis-work must have screened many an hour's despairing questionings as to whether the royal victim of her beauty, since she was separated from him, would ever deign to come and see her. The green muffled hills must have been scanned feverishly day after day by lustrous eyes for that royal and heart-stricken victim riding over from Eltham!

And then one day, perhaps when hope of ever seeing him again was almost dead, he arrived. The sound of horns blown faintly and at a distance reached the Castle's walls. The twilight of a summer's day may have closed in. The surrounding tracks or roads were notoriously full of quagmires. One can see the drawbridge raised, and Sir Thomas's stout retainers hurrying out with torches and no too even strides to guide and welcome the visitor who was no doubt well expected. He is seen to be the King. "The man like to become too big, with slits of eyes that gaze freely on all," rides into the courtyard. Sir Thomas Boleyn in an amazement if not honest, at all events well feigned, bends the knee, as he helps him to dismount. The big man mutters some frivolous pretext. He is well seen under the torch-light in the courtyard, every detail of him—the brow betokening sense and frankness, the eyebrows supercilious, the cheeks puffy, the gait rolling and straddling, the speech abrupt. He looks up covertly at the oriel window where that brightness hides herself who has lured this royal moth! One likes to think that Anne Boleyn was herself peeping from that very beautiful restoration which the present owner of Hever has called "Her Oratory." Beauty's prayers had been answered at all events.

It is said that Sir Thomas Boleyn read the King's real object through vague excuses, and humbly remarked that his daughter Anne was confined to her room with a bad cold. If a scandalous rumour is to be relied upon which connects the


Turret and
E. Angle of Moat.

HEVER CASTLE

King's name with Anne's elder sister, to say nothing of the lady of this Castle herself, the paternal solicitude veiling itself under a white lie, is not to be wondered at. It, however, did not prove to be enduring. Those royal horns sounded frequently enough now to herald the royal visitor. The retainers of Hever Castle, realizing how the wind blew, and alert for nobles, hurried impetuously out with torches and prostrations on the first sound of the august summons. And the beauty of the Castle no longer kept herself veiled. One of the most memorable love episodes in history now began to evolve itself. Ardent whispers were heard by these walls which can never tell their story, and long hand-pressures were exchanged in that long-neglected garden, which has recently been so beautifully restored. For, however little of real passion may have manifested itself in Anne's attitude, literary evidence exists to show that in Henry's there was plenty. In spite indeed of that insensibility to female beauty, which a late historian would have us believe was one of Henry's most marked characteristics, there can be little doubt that in the early stages of this courtship the infatuated but already married King made proffers of love in no honourable fashion. A reference has been made to scandalous rumours which before this time connected Henry the Eighth's name with the inmates of Hever Castle. With regard to Anne Boleyn herself, chivalric regard for a beauty now nearly four hundred years in her grave, would suggest that maidenly virtue was the motive of Anne's indignant reception of this royal *faux-pas.*

The verdict of after events, however, proclaims pretty clearly, that the Maid of Honour, by this time at any rate, had those lustrous eyes of hers fixed on the Crown Matrimonial. Let this, however, be urged for the aspiring Anne. This attitude of hers to the wooing of a royal suitor (still looked upon as one of the finest men in Europe), furnishes an argument, as it seems to me, of her possible innocence of the charges in after years pressed against her. The conflicting vagaries of woman's nature forbid definite deductions. Yet it seems hardly probable that one who had in the heyday of her youth resisted the importunities of a King, would, directly her ambition had been attained, fall a victim to the seductions of Court minstrels and stray Gentlemen at Arms. Two of these (Norris and Weston), with both of whom she was subsequently accused, were constantly in attendance on Henry during his visits to Hever. Anne must have frequently seen them at this time. And these are the men to whose attractions she is supposed to have succumbed, after having resisted those of the King on whom they were waiting. Mr. Froude would seem to have rested a good deal of his conviction of Anne's guilt on the fact that she once wished that she had something good for supper; and on the further suggestion, "that Cromwel, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Sir William Fitzwilliam (the noblemen who tried her) were not the sort of people to be accomplices of the King's in perhaps the most revolting murder ever committed." Personally, however, I am not disposed to think that a Maid of Honour who had been accustomed to French cooking must necessarily have been voluptuous because she once told a future Lord Chamberlain "that she wished she had some of his good meats, as carps, shrimps, and others." And as to the unimpeachable integrity of her Judges, I cannot forget that their judgment was given in days when the axe streamed with blood on Tower Hill, and noble heads leapt at the least sign of a thwarted tyrant's bidding. It may be true enough "that scarcely among the picked scoundrels of Newgate could men be found for such work," but the Cromwells, Norfolks, Suffolks, and Fitzwilliams of that day were not all Thomas Mores —nor could they for a moment pretend to approach his integrity. And what sort of a tainted witness would Lady Rochford be called in these days who was the prime witness in the prosecution? I believe that a case might still be made out for Anne Boleyn.

But whatever may be the truth as to her subsequent guilt or innocence, there can be no doubt in these Hever days (and it is with them that I am concerned) of the reality of Henry's passion. Its sincerity proclaims itself from the crumpled and time-stained surfaces of a series of letters which now lie in the galleries of the Vatican, but which were many of them delivered at the drawbridge of this finely restored moated house by fagged messengers wearing the royal livery. They were glad to lean for rest against the steaming horses which had brought them at breakneck speed from London. How eagerly these time-worn memorials of the enchanted Prince must have been awaited in those far-off days by the beauty of the Castle! How impetuously slender fingers must have entwined the enfolding silk (tied no doubt in a True Lovers' Knot), and carelessly broken open the ever accompanying present! It is worth while to dwell for a moment on one of these letters, sole records as they are of the love passages that make Hever storied. With one or two exceptions, which point conclusively to the coarseness of the age, they are agreeably free from indecencies. The passion which inspired them peeps out of many a phrase, and now and again informs the quaint diction of the time with a fervour which reaches to eloquence.

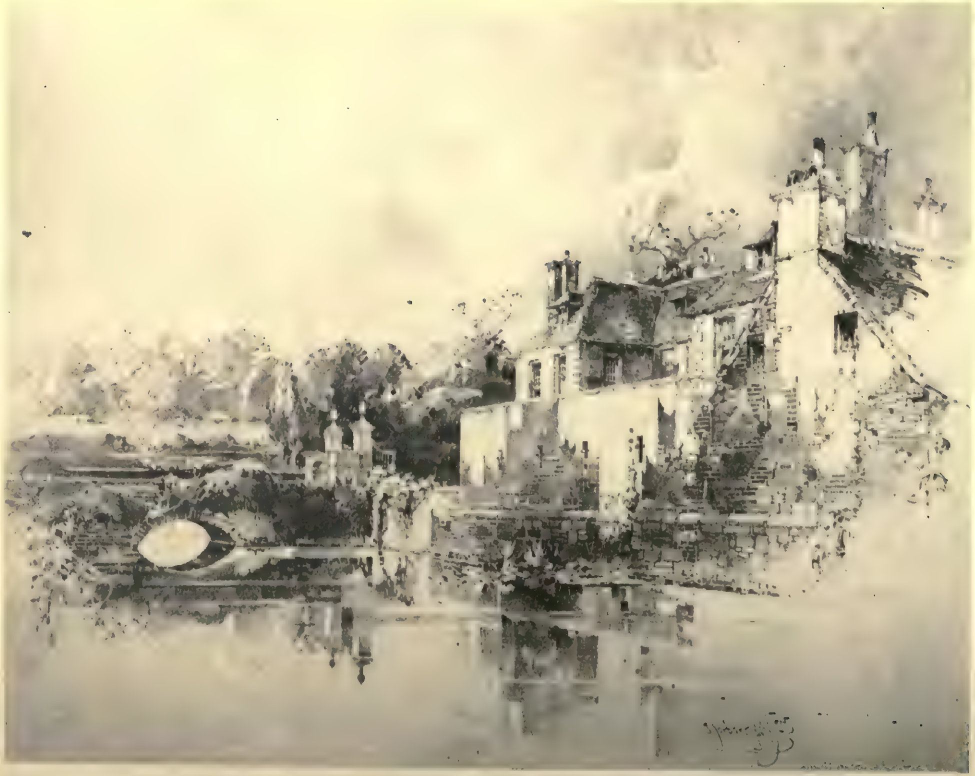
"My Mistress and friend," this royal lover writes, "I and my heart put ourselves into your hands, begging you to recommend us to your favour, and not to let absence lessen your affection to us. For it were a great pity to increase our pain, which absence alone does sufficiently, and more than I could ever have thought; bringing to my mind a point of Astronomy, which is that the further the Mores are from us the further too is the Sun, and yet his heat is the more scorching." [This passage is very obscure, and has much troubled commentators. Perhaps for "Mores" Poles should be read. Perhaps the passage had better be left in its original obscurity.] "So," the letter goes on, "it is with our love: we are at a distance from one another, and yet it keeps its fervency, at least on my side. I hope the like on your part, assuring you that the uneasiness of absence is already too severe for me; and when I think of the continuance of that which I must of necessity suffer, it would seem intolerable to me, were it not for this firm hope I have of your unchangeable affection to me: and now, to put you sometimes in mind of it, and seeing I cannot be present in person with you, I send you the nearest thing to that possible: that is my picture set in bracelets with the whole device which you know already, wishing myself in their place when it shall please you. This from the hand of your servant and friend. H. Rex."

In what particular place that "omen coming on" which this letter foreshadows, culminated in a royal betrothal, is not certainly known. History cannot help us here. Some dimly lighted alcove of Wolsey's palace at York House may have heard kingly and whispered vows offered and accepted. It is likely, however, that the august event so long watched for, took place at Hever Castle. And I like to think that it took place at Hever. And if this was so, at Hever also took place a certain historic game of bowls, at which this kingly matrimonial intent was first made manifest, and of which a knightly authority we have already quoted has left us a vivid recital. To leave Sir Thomas Wyatt's quaint form of speech behind us for a moment (since an example has already been given of it), it would seem that the Knight in question, while one day entertaining Anne Boleyn with the latest Court news, mingled with French gallantries and the latest county scandal in Kent, proceeded from spoken compliment to a more demonstrative token of his regard. He filched a small jewel which hung by a lace out of the beauty's pocket—with a view no doubt of its becoming heraldically cognizant of the beating of his own respectfully admiring heart. The lady, who had not parted with her property without some show of a struggle, now (and no doubt to the Knight's chagrin) abandoned all efforts at recovery. And so the incident might have passed. But it happened that there was somebody else at Hever at the moment who was keeping a watchful eye upon the Knight. None other in fact than that "big man like to become too big, with slits of eyes that gazed freely on all,"—Henry the Eighth himself, to be plain. And the first motions of that jealousy which was afterwards to work to such tragic issues prompted him to immediate action. The royal lover, as Anne's accepted suitor, took a ring from her hand and wore it upon his little finger. I seem to see this accepted and royal suitor leaving the triumphing beauty (dazed with this final realization of a long cherished dream), to pace the long gallery, with the steps no longer of hope deferred, and betaking himself with gait rolling and straddling, but with heart also beating high, to the Castle's bowling-green. Here, Wyatt, the man he had fears of, and two or three other gentlemen, were engaged in a friendly game, and Henry (in Wyatt's own words "more than ordinarrie pleasantly disposed") unbent himself to share the sport, and also at the same time to give Wyatt a reminder. This he did by beginning to cheat right royally at the royal game of bowls, lyingly yet at the same time allegorically alleging a cast to be his when it plainly appeared to be not so. So clearly indeed was the cast *not* the King's that even those fifteenth-century courtiers felt compelled to say (with His Grace's leave) that he was playing it up on them. But Henry's opportunity was now come. Pointing with the royal finger on which gleamed Annie Boleyn's ring of betrothal, he said to Wyatt, "I tell thee it is mine." To use an expression of a later age of culture, Wyatt now "tumbled." In plain words, he cast his eyes upon the King's finger, and saw that by "*it*," the King meant not the cast but the lady. The sight may have given him pause. But the man who in Henry's own words could tame lions was not easily silenced. After looking at the ring with much attention, he tuned himself to Henry's own allegory, and remarking, "If it may like your Majesty to give me leave to measure it, I hope it will be mine," drew from his neck the lace with Anne Boleyn's jewel pendant, and stooped to measure the disputed cast. It was now the King's turn to stare, and also to spurn away the bowl, remarking, or probably roaring, "It may be so, but then I am deceived," and so broke up the game. This story, which I have dwelt upon because it very likely foreshadows future trifling and misrepresented indiscretions which proved fatal to Anne herself, may be rounded in Wyatt's own words. "This thing thus carried," he writes, "was not perceived of many, but of some few it was. Now the King resortinge to his chamber, showing some resentment in his countenance, found means to break the matter to the lady, who with good and evident proofe how the Knight came by the jewel, satisfied the King so effectually, that this more confirmed the King's opinion of her truth and virtue, than himself at the first could have expected."

Whether this trifling episode which still might have ended seriously, occurred at Hever Castle or not, is, as I have said before, uncertain. But no uncertainty exists as to its having brought the Maid of Honour's matrimonial ambitions to a definite head, and crowned that brilliant destiny which had here found its rustic starting-point and its golden goal. From this point onwards, so far as documents can tell us, Anne Boleyn's practical contact with Hever ceased. There is a suggestion indeed in one of the King's undated letters (written at a time when that sixteenth-century Influenza known as the Sweating Sickness was abroad in the land) which prescribes native air as a possible preventative against the pestilence; and by native air the breezes which blow about the gables of Hever may be pointed at. Probability, however, which I have already fully strained, seems to forbid the supposition that the brilliant girl who has made this fine moated house immortal by the passages of a romantic love-story, ever set foot in it as an English Queen. Some such precursors of the present fine restoration would have heralded that visit. No such record of royal refurbishing exists.

Yet, if indeed Anne Boleyn never again rested the eye of the flesh on this scene of her girlhood and its dazzling accomplishment, I like to believe that mind-pictures of the old home in Kent were often present to that finer vision of the spirit at every pause of that strange life-experience as it moved inflexibly through pomp and pageant to the goal assigned—to the Headsman from Calais, and the quiet green within the Tower. Here surely, at this supreme goal, the discrowned and dishonoured beauty's mind went back. That crowded hour of glorious life may have for the moment drowned the voices of earlier days. Hever with its green fields and sunlit towers may not have crossed the young Queen's fancy when amidst the roar of acclaiming London, through streets tapestried with cloth of gold and past conduits running wine, she was borne to Coronation, a visible embodiment of all that was most lovely and idolized in the land; or when the course of splendid banquets and the pauses of a nation's holiday were startled by the carronades which proclaimed the birth of Elizabeth; or when at the conclusion of a royal tournament, and throned as Queen of Beauty, she gave the prize to gallants whose admiration was presently to undo her! In moments such as these the link with which I like to fancy Anne Boleyn and Hever indissolubly joined may have for the time being been severed, the visions of the home in Kent blurred, its memory grown faint as that of some friend's face seen long since and half forgotten. But it would not have been so in the end. When that brilliant masque of life had been played out, when treachery or frailty had done their worst, and the grim walls of the Tower had closed for ever on earthly hope: when in the very room in which she had slept before her coronation, she sat down, abandoned of the world, to write to Henry the Eighth perhaps the most beautiful and pathetic letter in the language; on that April morning, even when she passed across the Tower Green to the imminent and visible end, and in one confused impression of the scaffold, saw the daisies springing to life, the Headsman from Calais masked and immobile, leaning on his sword, the cannoneer with linstock smoking standing by the gun which was to bellow to a listening husband the brutal signal that his faithlessness was free :—in such supreme moments, and in that wide and instantaneous vision of the dying, I like to think that the Past reappeared to Anne Boleyn, fragrant with memories of the old Hever home ; to think that she saw in the spirit and for the last time the quaint courtyard ; the broad and brimming moat ; the arboured garden ; the warder on the watch-tower with gauntleted hand to brow, a motionless figure relieved against the sky line, and alert for the royal visitor ; the sleepy streams and green pastures of the Eden shining in the setting sun

Fantastic fancies ! on which the same sun sets in pomp and pageantry, clothing the old Castle's walls with something of a visionary splendour. A homeward-bound ploughboy whistles as cheerily as his ancestor may have done on the day of Wolsey's death. Magic breathes in the intense stillness of the evening air. And everywhere, haunting castle and garden like some faint perfume of the days long dead, everywhere moves a fugitive and elusive form, never fully seen, leaving but a fantastic impression of jewelled coif and perfumed velvet, and soft eyes that shine alluringly, and the gracious rustle of woman's dress, and the faint echo of ghostly and departing footsteps. It is "the brown girl with the perthroat and the extra finger." It is the incarnation of the Middle Ages. And it is to the infinite credit and taste of the present owner of Hever that such memories and impressions of the Past still cling about an old house which has undergone a restoration as scholarly as it is complete.



GROOMBRIDGE HALL

XXIV

GROOMBRIDGE

1660

THE date of Charles the Second's accession to the throne is carved over the entrance to Groombridge, but the story of this moated house and some remains of its building are the heritage of an earlier foundation. The site is one of extreme and almost sylvan beauty. Undulating Park-lands, having much of the characteristics in them of a Chace, lie round it. Fine trees in summer cast an antique shade. The moat which encircles it, flows more freely than in some places of the kind, and wards from a noisy world not only the house itself but the pleasant expanses of an old-world garden and the smooth area of well-trimmed lawns. An atmosphere of poetry breathes from surroundings which have inspired at different periods of history two of the inhabitants of the house. Charles Duke of Orleans courted the Muse here in the days of Agincourt, and must have found the hours of imprisonment made lighter by the quiet and the serenity of the spot. The lapse of ~~one~~ two hundred and ~~fifty~~ odd years may have seen Edmund Waller the poet of the Parliament pacing garden and park-lands in one of those meditative rambles which gave birth to his lyrical outbursts. Groombridge may have given "Go lovely Rose" to a grateful world.

The coming of the Muses to the place was nevertheless heralded, not by Apollo, "leading his choir the Nine," but by "Bellona lapp'd in proof." For in plain words the owner of Groombridge, who brought poetry into his house, found that richest gift of the Gods, not on the slopes of an imaginary Parnassus, but on a certain level and narrow tract of marsh-land which borders the course of the Somme. The chill evening of a rainy day found Richard Waller, then lord of Groombridge, searching among the bodies of eleven thousand dead Frenchmen on the field of Agincourt. The searcher who, in battered and bloodstained armour, and with torch in hand, was thus examining the leavings of that tremendous day, had borne himself throughout it with conspicuous gallantry. Under his calm, and immediate direction, many a Sussex and Kentish archer had let fly "those crooked sticks and grey goose wings" which had decimated with their fatal flight the chosen chivalry of France. But as the fighting was over, and more than a hundred Princes and great lords lay dead upon the ground which he was examining so curiously, the pardonable suspicion may be suggested that Richard Waller was, what is classically termed in these days, on "the make." In plain words, he had got glory and was looking for loot. He found it in the almost inanimate person of a poetic Prince lying half-crushed under a great heap of dead. Charles, Duke of Orleans, as soon as some suggestions of breath was restored to his body, was committed into the custody of his captor.

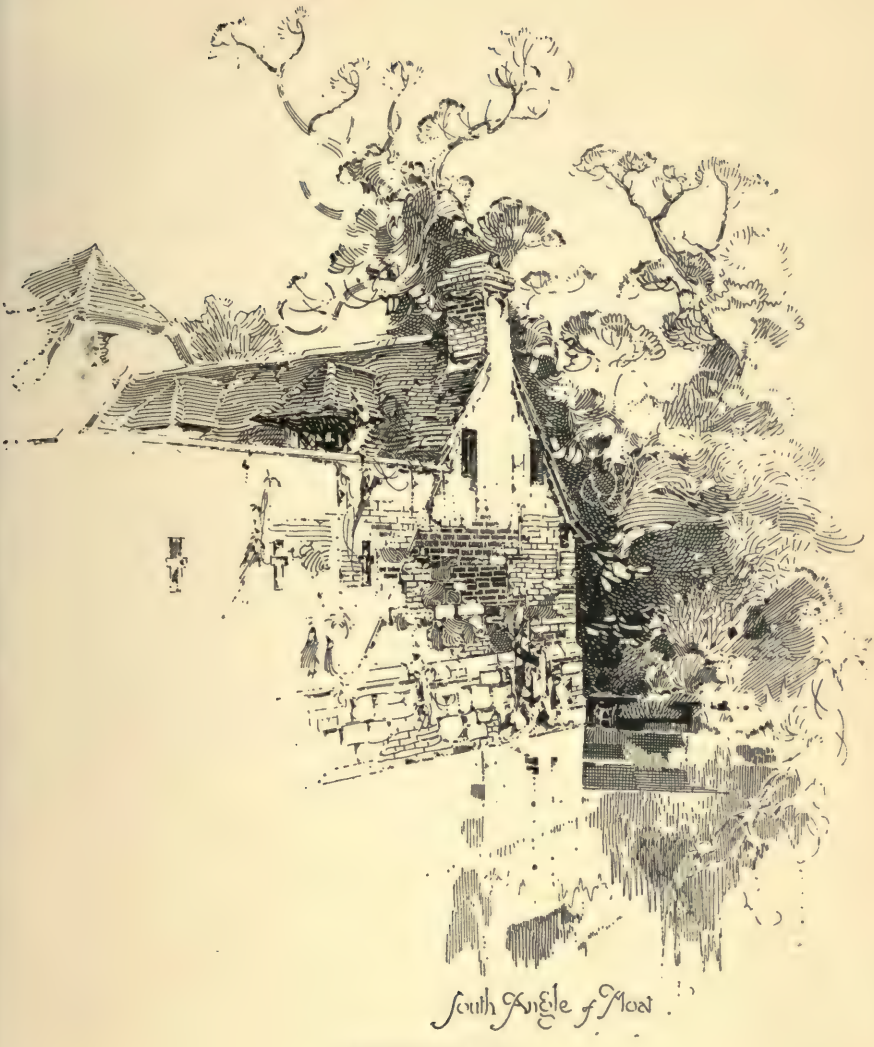
The lyrical outputs of this royal prisoner may be read in the record offices of two countries, and in extremely quaint old French. They bear few traces of an imprisonment, which probably took more the form of a respectful surveillance under parole. Indeed the fact that custodian and guarded guest were on another footing than that of gaoler and ward, is shown by the fact that the Duke of Orleans gave Richard Waller the money with which to make additions to his moated house. The new Groombridge which rose under these agreeably generous conditions had, we may be sure, not many of the features of a prison about it; though, unfortunately, little of this foundation is now to be seen. Nor is a further example of the captive Prince's architectural way of showing that he was well treated left for the admiration of posterity, since it was destroyed by lightning in 1701. Here follow the facts which led up to this catastrophe. Not content with presenting Richard Waller with a new house, the captive Duke of Orleans built the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Speldhurst a new Church, and no doubt regularly attended mass there on Sundays and saints' days, to the admiration and wonder of rustics for miles round. The memory of Agincourt it must be remembered was then fresh in people's minds. The clefting of the crown on the English King's helmet by the sword of Alençon was a nightly episode of fireside talk at every ale-house in the neighbourhood.

A captive Prince taken on that glorious field, and now sitting pensively in the pew of a village church, was a sight not to be seen every day in Kent. The priest of Speldhurst had no cause we may be sure to deplore the sparseness of his congregations. "Standing room only" would have been the order of the day, and the very aisles of the Duke of Orleans' new church were no doubt crowded. His arms, carved on a stone set over the new church door, is the only relic left of this ecclesiastical generosity.

His keeper and friend, meanwhile, left his prisoner to poetry and his own devices, and sought fresh fields and pastures new; but fields where glory other than poetic was to be reaped, and pastures which, by the help of a strictly martial tending, came to a strictly military harvest. The man who had seen Agincourt and taken a Prince prisoner was always ready for a fight. The year 1424 therefore saw Richard Waller riding across the bridge over the Groombridge moat with his veteran band of retainers. Many of them would still bear the scars of the great battle, and France was again to make acquaintance with their iron personalities, and their perfected art of letting fly a goose's shaft from a taught bow-string. The vacillating Henry the Sixth had come to the throne two years before, at the mature age of nine months, but the spirit of his warlike father still inspired England's armies. Waller and his Groombridge contingent fought under the banner of the great Duke of Bedford, and the tale of Agincourt was repeated at Vermeuil. Once more the attack came from the French. Once more it resulted in half the flower of France's chivalry strewing the ground. A nine or ten years' repose at Groombridge followed this last active feat, during which Richard relieved the tedium of looking at the moat round his house and listening to his prisoner's talk (of which he most probably understood nothing) by performing in a properly rigid way the dual duties of Sheriff for Sussex and Surrey. Kent, as being the seat of his own private and moated residence, one imagines, might have been thrown in, without affecting the calm of this Plantagenet. Two years after, however, another office was put upon Richard Waller's always willing shoulders. He had a new prisoner to guard, or rather to entertain, at Groombridge, as a fifteenth-century paying guest. This blessing in disguise took the form of the Count of Angoulême, the Duke of Orleans' brother.

The surveillance of two princes of the French blood royal would have been sufficient honour and pastime for most soldiers, who had survived the experience of two tremendous stricken fields, and who had a country house to rest himself in after such labours, whose site and surroundings are still a source of delight to a sixth generation. But Richard Waller was of a temperament over which ambition, or that restlessness which is so often mistaken for it, held complete control. In his moated Kentish home he pined for the shock of events, and not being able to taste them at the moment in the tented field, he went to look for them at Court. The move brought him into ominous company. For, though his first duty in the employ of a new master was an expedition to France to sue for peace, he went on this always desirable, and for the England of that day, extremely necessary mission as Master of the Household to the notorious Cardinal Beaufort. Whether Richard Waller's intimacy with his sinister master made him a spectator of that dreadful death-bed scene which Shakespeare set to words which will always create a shudder, is uncertain. But as the Cardinal made him one of his executors in his will of the 20th January, he probably was. As a consequence, he would have witnessed, and with the same immovability which he had shown at Agincourt and at Vermeuil, the despairing efforts of a murderous soul to set itself free:—would have heard the frenzied cries of the dying man to comb down the hair of the spectre that confronted him in his death agony; and the dying Cardinal's screams for drink, or, for the poison that he had bought of the apothecary. Still unmoved, Richard would have seen the passage of that dark soul, and the grin fixed on his lips by the final death pang.

It may have been a fortunate thing for Richard Waller that his iron nerves had been additionally strengthened to endure the strain of this experience, by some further preliminary campaigning in France. During the years 1442–3 he served under Sir John Fastolf. This celebrated soldier was also a complete character in the modern acceptation of the word, and as he called the owner of Groombridge "his right well beloved brother," a sketch may be given of him in immediate connection with the house. In the intervals of campaigning he would have been a visitor here. Sir John then, when he laid his armour aside,



South Angle of Moat

GROOMBRIDGE HALL

distinguished himself by the state and magnificence with which he invested the duties, the labours and the pleasures of the life of a country Squire. He had built himself a great house at Caister near Yarmouth, and some episodes of his tenancy, and the griefs and worries that befell him, may be read with a smile in the pages of the Paston Letters.

In the year 1450, when Jack Cade was putting the principles of our modern socialism into extremely practical form, and Richard Waller then resident at Groombridge received orders to arrest him, under the alias of John Mortimer, Sir John Fastolf heard in London that things were not going on at Caiston as the eternal fitness of things directed that they should. While Sir John was junketing in the capital the servants of his country estate were similarly employed in Norfolk. The parson at Castlecombe, who it seems was acting as Steward or overseer to the great man, wrote to him complaining that his authority was being set at naught, and that domestic riot was rampant in the stately family mansion where all ought to have been order and domestic peace. A melancholy story was unfolded in a long letter. Sir John's wine was being drunk; ancillary hands had been laid upon his wardrobe; men-servants had been seen disporting themselves in the absent master's best clothes; or, in a mock tournament held in the servants' hall, had donned the armour which had borne the buffets of Agincourt and Vermeuil to say nothing of those less honourable shocks which had been inflicted, before Orleans and elsewhere, by Joan of Arc. This was bad enough, but worse remained behind. And the rage of Sir John may be imagined when, as a climax to all these minor insubordinations, the fell news reached his ears that somebody had been poaching his rabbits. Most of the country gentlemen's dinner parties of this period were practically composed of rabbit pies, and in 1450 landowners looked as jealously after their rabbits as their representatives of to-day look after pheasants' eggs. Confronted with this enormity, Sir John Fastolf took his pen in hand, and after no doubt a painful and prolonged labour delivered himself of the following letter in characters which look like spear-heads, and which illegibly disclosed (amongst other matters) two oaths which will be new to contemporary swearers, but which were extremely in vogue at the time of the Hundred Years' War. Thus wrote the Knight, incoherent under the Servant difficulty of 1450, and smarting from the attentions of poachers of the same date:—

"To my trusty and well beloved friend Sir Thomas Howe parson of Castlecomb.

"Trusty and well beloved friend, I greet you well, and I pray you send me word who dare to be so hardy to kick against you, in my right, and say to them on my behalf, that they shall be quiet, as far as Law and reason will, and if they will not obey that, then they shall be quiet by *Black Beard* or *White Beard*, that is to say by God or the Devil. . . .

"*Item.* I hear of many strange reports of demeaning the governance of my place at Caister: and other places, as in my Chatell approving, in my wines, the keeping of my wardrobe and cloths, the Avail of my Conies at Hellesdon, as my full trust is in you to help and reform it.

"LONDON *Wednesday 27th May* 1450
28 Hen VI"

or if the original heading be preferred in all its picturesque obscurity:—

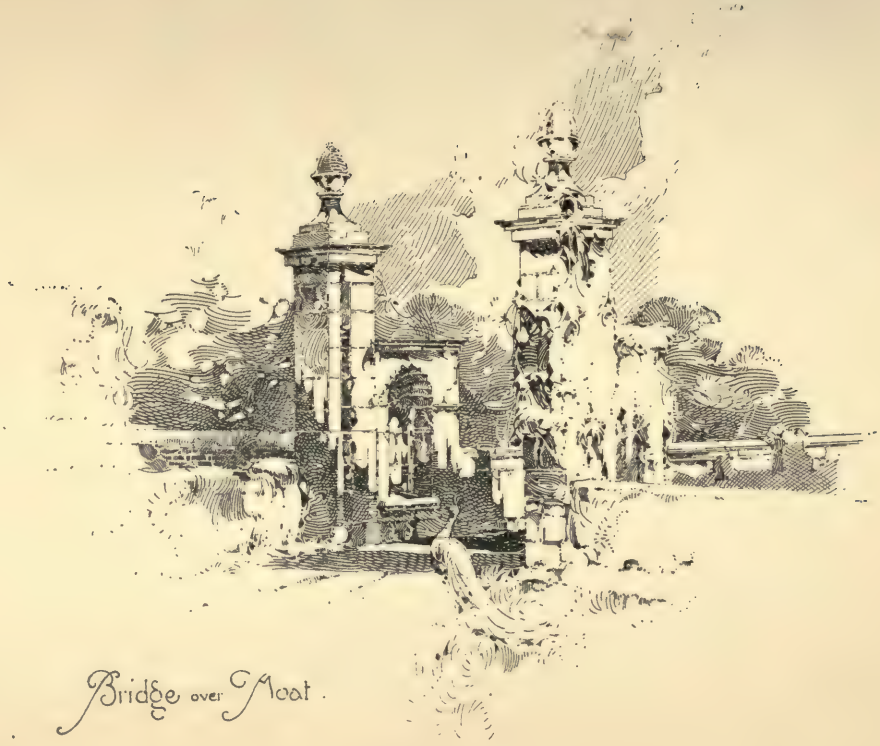
"Wryt at London XXVij day of May
XXViij R.R.H.Vj"

Is not the grief of this fifteenth-century absentee landlord touching? Is not his indignation on the servant question quite up to date? Like Lord Byron, he swears by the Post, when he thinks of poachers.

Five years after, while his friend and fellow-soldier Richard Waller, after having made peace with the Yorkists, was carrying out, from Groombridge, the lucrative and responsible duties of Receiver of the King's Castle, lands and Manors in Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire, Sir John had again to write another letter, and as this was the date of the first battle of St. Alban's on an appropriately military matter. But it was not the battle of St. Alban's that Sir John had to write about, but the battle of Vermeuil, already alluded to. This last piece of correspondence was about a sum of six thousand six hundred and sixty-six pounds, thirteen shillings and fourpence, due to the Duke of Bedford for his capture of the Duke of Alençon in that celebrated fight. Of this reward Sir John seems to have only received six hundred and sixty-six pounds, thirteen and fourpence as his share, up to date. This left two thousand six hundred and sixty-six pounds, thirteen and fourpence yet to be tabled, without any apparent prospect of that formality taking place. The thirteen and fourpence seems to me a characteristic touch: but Sir John Falstolf was very wroth about it. Four years afterwards, however, death closed his money worries just as he had reached the age of eighty.

The lord of Groombridge only survived his friend and commanding officer a year. The successors to the estate seem to have realized that a moat was not only a protective agent when a country was rent by internecine strife, but was also a valuable asset of defence in times of political storm and stress. Actuated by this belief they religiously kept themselves inside it for one hundred and eighty-two years. In plain words they lived like sensible people on their fine and picturesque estate, and let hotter heads occupy themselves with political affairs. This record of a county family's reticence brings the story of the house to the outbreak of the Civil War, and finds its representative donning the Orange scarf of the Parliament.

Sir Hardress Waller now appears upon the scene, martial, like his ancestors, and, wearing across his steel breastplate, the Parliamentary badge. It would seem that he ought not to have worn it, as he had been knighted by Charles the First at Nonsuch on the 6th of July 1629. Political views, however, changed as quickly in the days of the Stuarts, as they do in the present year of Grace, when in a practically bankrupt country, everything is going to be remedied in a moment by a long programme of confiscation. Sir Hardress Waller meanwhile, though he was destined eventually to *rat*, waited for events and postponed that agreeable feat as long as was politically possible. In this connection, the fact that he should have made Ireland the scene of his political and military activity should occasion no surprise. He began his career in a very sensible way, by marrying an Irishwoman (her name was Elizabeth), and settled down on her estate of Castletown, County Limerick. The Irish rebellion of 1641 disturbed carefully acquired quiet, and Sir Hardress, having lost his property through the too insistent attentions of armed bands of Irish rebels, remembered that his name was Waller, and took sword in hand. Under the command of the celebrated Inchiquin, he rode as a Colonel of horse against the rebels of Munster. Money was however wanted for the campaign, or for somebody, and money was not a factor to be found often in King Charles the First's coffers. The Civil War broke out, as is generally known, on 22nd August 1642. On the first of December of that year Sir Hardress Waller in the company of three other Colonels, approached the King, then holding his Court at Merton College, Oxford, with a petition from the Protestants of Ireland. They wanted money. But the moment for their appeal was ill-timed. Charles had none for himself, and with some dexterity referred the ambassadors to that Parliament, which was not at the moment sitting, and with which he was at the moment at war. Nothing consequently came of the deal. But it is to be gravely suspected that its unfortunate result, taken in connection with Sir Hardress Waller's personal inspection of the royal and empty coffers, directly brought about his somewhat precipitate change of front. He went back to Ireland from Oxford without any money in his pocket, and he had no sooner got there than, in a complete forgetfulness of the honours which had been conferred on him at Nonsuch, he conducted himself in such a way that he was openly accused of being a Roundhead. It is perhaps natural that his first probation while lying under this suspicion, should have occurred to him at Cork. He was governor of what is known as the Rebel City in 1644. The irresistible tide of victorious battle rolled over long Marston Moor in the July of this year; and Sir Hardress, inspired by fortunate event, crossed to England, and openly put on the winning colours. He was given the command of a regiment of foot in Cromwell's model army, and served under Fairfax till the war ended. In his capacity of military turncoat he saw the final wave of disaster engulph the King's army at Naseby; and with the instinct that was in him of getting off on the right side of the fence he devoted himself heart, and soul, and banking account to the fortunes of Cromwell. In this great service his duties were many; and they were well paid. In the celebrated administration of Colonel Prydes Purge, he played so prominent a part, that when members of Parliament were turned out of their seats by soldiers (an historical event which may possibly repeat itself in a not too far distant future), Sir Hardress Waller personally laid


Bridge over Moat.

GROOMBRIDGE HALL

his venal and ejecting hands on Prynne. The attachment of his signature, written in a fairly legible hand, to the death-warrant of Charles the First was the logical sequence to a political agitation conducted on such lines. That Sir Hardress took a prominent part in what is called Cromwell's reconquest of Ireland, is also a fact in complete keeping. He served in that monstrous campaign, in which under the pretence of Piety, Fanaticism showed, and to the full, its diabolical force, as a Major-General. He commanded at the Siege of Carlow in the year after Charles the First's execution; and two sieges of Limerick subsequently occupied his attention. When the struggle, if struggle it can be called ended, Sir Hardress Waller was actively employed on the congenial task of transplanting the Irish to Connaught.

Strange to say, though he had served Cromwell so faithfully following, in plain words, that adventurer's fortunes, through thick and thin, he never received any preferment from him. The fact is that this lord of Groombridge, probably from having changed his political views too suddenly, could never quite shake off the suspicion of being a double-dealer. And it is probable that in this rôle, and before his open defection to the cause of the Parliament, he was an active agent in those mysterious negotiations to flood England with Irish troops, which did more than anything else to bring Charles the First to the scaffold. Cromwell did not trust this zealous Parliamentarian. Nor did General Monk. And the final proof of his continual double-dealing may be found in the fact that, though his signature can still be read at the foot of Charles the First's Death-Warrant, this regicide escaped with his life. He died a prisoner in the Castle of Jersey, probably six years after the Restoration.

The character and the doings of this owner of Groombridge are so out of keeping with the poetry of the place, that it is pleasant to turn to another representative of the family, who though never a possessor of this Moated House, often visited it, and conferred on it by visits an added distinction in the pauses of a poetic story. This happy advent came about in the following way, and here Genealogy must lend us her aid. Richard Waller the original owner of Groombridge, whose fortunes have already been traced, had two sons by his wife whose name was Sylvia. Their respective names were Richard and John. John who had died in 1517 had (previously of course to this) become the father of another John. And this second John had the honour and the good luck to be the father of Edmund Waller, the poet.

Edmund was born at Coleshill Manor House on 3rd March 1606, so that he narrowly missed being a Gunpowder Plot child and the added honour of being born in the year which saw the publication of *The Advancement of Learning*. For his own education he went to Eton and King's College, Cambridge, and determined the side on which he was to take in the Civil War by a marriage which made him related to both Hampden and Cromwell. But political sympathies brought about by marriage are often as unreal as that fabled happiness which is supposed always to follow it, and Royalist leanings beat fast under the buff coat of the scholar of Eton and King's. Poetic movings also gave this parliamentarian pause. And a commission which his party gave him to act as one of the Commissioners to treat with Charles the First at Oxford very nearly resulted in his finding his neck in a noose. The King's Court was at Merton College in those days and the finest women in England took the air in its beautiful garden. The poet that was in Waller responded to these seductive environments, and he very soon found himself a party to the Plot. Conspiracy, however, is not for poets or Irishmen. And though Waller in the inevitable moment of discovery alleged that he fell into this one by accident, the kind of accident which involved the seizing of the City of London for Charles the First, its magazines, the Tower and the appointment of the Earl of Bath, who was a prisoner there, as commander for the King, did not appeal to the critical appreciation of the Parliament. The facts of this conspiracy, which in spite of his protestations was called by the name of the poet are naturally of an extreme simplicity. Lady d'Aubigny brought a Commission of Array with the Great Seal attached from Oxford to London. Waller, who lived at the lower end of Holborn near Halton House, showed it to Richard Challoner who lived at the Holborn end of Fetter Lane. Richard Challoner showed it to Nathaniel Tompkins, Nathaniel Tompkins showed it by accident to his clerk who happened to be looking over his shoulder. The clerk informed the authorities of what he had seen. The result was that Challoner and Tompkins were hung opposite their own front doors two days after they had been tried—and Waller the poet was set the pleasant task of saving his own neck if he wanted to write any more poetry. His preliminary methods do not commend themselves to the palate, for though he pretended to be mad, his madness had method in it, and took the form of offering £10,000 for his own life, and a perfectly false accusation endangering the lives of about seven other perfectly innocent people. A more savoury effort took the form of an extremely able speech in the House of Commons which with the timely intervention of Cromwell got him out of the scrape on the conditions of the tabling of the £10,000 already referred to and an immediately going abroad.

"Not here oh Apollo, however, are haunts fit for thee," and it is a pleasing change to see the poet, freed from the mud of that intrigue into which he should never have strayed, living in France in the company of John Evelyn, and Thomas Hobbes; returning finally at the Restoration; becoming a favourite at the Court of Charles and James the Second in spite of temperate habits and an unalterable determination to drink nothing but water. It is more pleasant still to picture this man of middle height, dark complexion, and prominent eyes paying one of those periodical visits to the Groombridge Moated Hall, which for the second time in its history linked it to the society of the Muses. On its well-trimmed lawns, on the pleasant uplands of the park, Waller can be seen wandering; or gazing pensively into the moat and seeing in its still waters the reflection of that coy yet radiant village beauty who inspired him with his most finished and melodious verse. The rose of his poem's allegory bloomed in the old-world garden close at hand. The surroundings were tuned for the rhapsodies of a courtly and not too passionate lover. They resulted in those verses which should be in the memory of all who care for English poetry, and which may fitly close this memorial of Groombridge with fragrance and with music.

"Go lovely Rose
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows
When I resemble her to thee
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That had'st thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of Beauty from the light retired.
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair."

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